Disability Employment Toolkit

Book II

Landing the Right Job

Tools for Job Seekers With Disabilities

Compiled by:

Joan E. Cummings, PhD
Maritime School of Social Work
Dalhousie University

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Book II

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Step 1: Setting the Stage for Success 5

Taking Control of the Process 7
Overcoming Barriers 8
Weighing Your Options on Disability Benefits 9
About CPP Disability Benefits 9
About Family Benefits 10
Taking Care of Your Transportation Needs 12
Arranging Child Care 12
Gathering Necessary Employment Supports 13
Disclosure of a Disability 14
Dealing with a Criminal Record 15

Step 2: Recognizing and Asserting Your Skills 17

Identifying Your Best Attributes and Skills 19
Assessing Readiness to Meet Employer Expectations 21
Academic Skills 21
Personal Management Skills 22
Teamwork Skills 23
Expressing Experience and Accomplishments in Action Language 23

Step 3: Defining Realistic Goals and Employment Plans 27

Importance of Goals 29
Setting Your Goals 29
The Local Labour Market 30
Education and Training Options 32
Funding for Education and Training 33
Employment Options 34

Step 4: Writing A Convincing Resume 35

Purpose and Importance of a Resume 37
What to Include 37
Contact Information 38
An Employment Objective 38
Summary of Qualifications 39

Education and Training 39
Work Experience 39
Professional/Community Activities 40
Interests/Hobbies 41
Choosing References Wisely 41
Appearance, Grammar and Style 41
Electronic Resume Formats 42
Preparing Resumes for Scanning 43
Submission by E-mail 43
Posting on the Internet 44
Customizing Dynamic Cover Letters 44
Final Resume Checklist 46

Step 5: Conducting a Creative Job Search 47

Pursuing Formal Job Listings 49
Using the Library 50
Tapping the Hidden Job Market 51
Networking 52
Job Fairs 54
Identifying Potential Employers and Making "Cold" Calls 54
Identifying Employment Equity Organizations 56
Requesting Informational Interviews 57
Searching the Internet 59
Submitting and Following Up on Job Applications and Resumes 60

Step 6: Making Your Interview a Winner 63

The Interview Process 65
Getting Prepared 66
Creating a Favourable Impression 68
Responding Effectively to Questions 69
Discussing Your Disability and Accommodation Needs 71
Following Up on Your Interviews 74
Accepting a Job Offer 75

Step 7: Reaching for a Successful Future 77

Learning the New Job 79
Improving Existing Skills, Learning New Ones 80
Engaging With Co-workers 81
Maintaining Your Support Network 82
Re-examining and Re-defining Your Goals and Plans 83

Appendices **85**

A. Information Regarding Family Benefits 87
B. Accessible Transportation 95
C. Self-descriptive Words for Use in a Resume 97
D. Employability Skills 99
E. Action Verbs for Resume Writing 101
F. Locations of Human Resource Centres 103
G. Employability Assistance for People With Disabilities 105
H. The Opportunities Fund 115
I. Sample Resume 119
J. Sample Cover Letter 121

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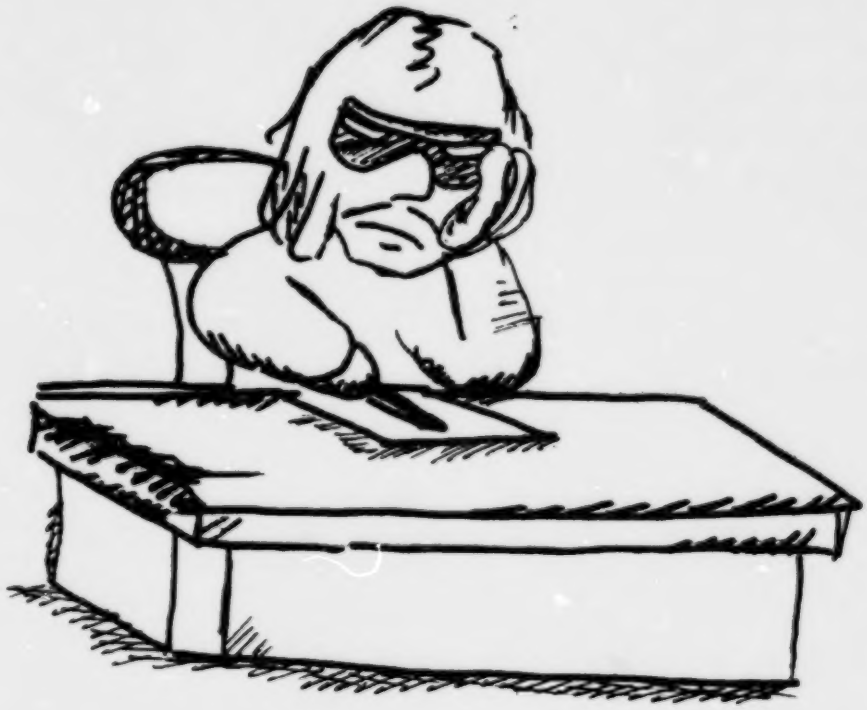
Introduction



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Introduction:

Congratulations! You are embarking on an important journey towards a brighter and more fulfilling future. Sometimes your job-finding journey will be exciting and rewarding, other times frustrating and disappointing. Just keep in mind that it's always worthwhile.

Looking for a job, especially if you have a disability, is very demanding. Make it your full time job. If the going gets tough now and then, don't lose sight of why you started out in the first place. You want that job, the right job for you. You're willing to do whatever it takes to find it!

Different people may have different starting points. Perhaps you are already working. You just want something more challenging. Maybe you've had to stop work because of your disability. Perhaps you are finding that relying on disability benefits is demoralizing and you want the independence and self-esteem that productive work can bring. Or maybe you're seeking work for the very first time. Whatever your starting point, take every step of your job-hunt seriously and give it your best. Each step well done makes the next easier. Don't forget that a series of small achievements can add up to big success in the end.

We hope this Toolkit will help you move successfully through the various phases of job finding. Try out the suggested tools for each step. Review the directory of employment service providers put out by the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission. It is entitled *The Nova Scotia Employment Resources Directory* and is available from the Commission or on their web site at:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/disa/ERD.HTM

Names, phone and fax numbers, e-mail and web addresses are given. Contact these sources whenever you need help, information or just moral support.

Now let's get started!

Step 1:
Setting the Stage for Success

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Setting the Stage for Success

Finding a job is a little like building a house. The end result is only as solid as the foundation on which it rests. Begin your process of building by getting the important basics in order.

Adequate attention to your realities will go a long way towards ensuring success at the end. Pay attention to your psychological readiness. Take realistic account of your personal and family circumstances. Identify your likely barriers and options for overcoming them. Consider what supports you now have and what you will need to become employed. Figure out a strategy for getting necessary supports in place. Plan ahead for how you will deal with the attitudes of others towards your disability, and especially how you will approach maintaining a focus on your abilities over your disabilities. All these basics are the "stuff" of Step 1.

Taking Control of the Process

Make up your mind right now to maintain the focus squarely on your abilities. You can do this and still be realistic about your disabilities and barriers. A proper mix of optimism and realism is a good foundation. Here are some things to think about:

- Strong motivation is key. Be determined to succeed. There is no substitute for commitment to following through on the task you undertake.
- Be prepared to take risks in unfamiliar and scary situations even when your self-confidence isn't quite up to scratch. Remember, self-confidence is built on small, incremental successes.
- Stay focused and avoid distractions. They are everywhere – family, friends, the room that needs painting, a bridge game waiting for a fourth. Be demanding of yourself and don't cut corners.
- Get help when you need it. You don't need to fly solo. There are plenty of people out there who can provide constructive feedback and support – family, friends, employment service providers. Employment professionals can often provide valuable information and direct you to necessary financial and other supports.
- Learn from your mistakes but don't dote on them. Everyone makes mistakes. Take disappointments in stride. Think of every action you take as an opportunity to practice and learn. That way you'll do better next time.
- Take credit for your successes. Pat yourself on the back for each achievement. This will build your confidence and keep you going.

- Don't expect success immediately. It takes time, patience, and most of all, perseverance and hard work to find the right job.

- Practise, practise and practise presenting yourself confidently and assertively. Competing for a wanted job in a tight labour market takes guts and determination. It's not for the faint of heart.

- Get ready for some disappointments and rejections along the way. Remember that job-finding is partly a numbers game. Every rejection puts you that much closer to success!

- Don't pretend to be someone you're not. If you find that your skills need improvement, that's fine. Just make skill-building the first priority in your employment plan.

- Finally and perhaps most importantly, think of your job-finding journey as a wonderful opportunity to identify and appreciate the positive personal qualities other people like in you. Remember, employers are people. They like those positive qualities too.

Overcoming Barriers

Most disabled people face barriers. Don't let them defeat you. Remember, you have the edge over most non-disabled people. You've almost certainly had lots of practice at devising creative solutions. So, just acknowledge your creativity and give yourself credit where it's due!

Start out by making a list of barriers you have already overcome. Write them down carefully. Be sure your list is complete. Next to each barrier, write down the creative solution you applied. Be sure to include every successful action you have taken. If you're not good at recognizing your own achievements, ask other people to help you. You certainly do have positive achievements. It's not possible to manage a disability without overcoming barriers. Now, when you have finished your list, look it over again. Give yourself permission to really appreciate your own accomplishments. They are the successes on which you'll build your future strategy.

Now make a list of barriers you've not fully overcome and new ones you foresee in seeking employment. Write them down too. Next to each, write down once again creative solutions you think you might be able to apply or that other people you know have applied. Put a check mark beside the ones that seem to stump you the most. These are the ones you'll need to work hardest on as part of your employment strategy. You don't want them to block your path to employment.

Share your "to do" list of unresolved barriers as widely as you can. Ask your friends what they did about the same problems. People are usually proud to show their creativity in solving their problems.

Contact an employment service provider in your local area. They often know how and where to access particular kinds of disability-related and employment-related resources. Ask for their advice and follow up rigorously on their suggestions.

Weighing Your Options on Disability Benefits

The benefits most commonly relied on by Nova Scotians with long-term disabilities are Canada Pension Disability Benefits and provincial Family Benefits.

Both benefit programs can feel like a hard trap to escape because of built-in work disincentives. Despite the disincentives, however, people with disabilities continue to demonstrate their ingenuity. Many have learned how to use benefits effectively to pursue important employment goals. For others confusion and misinformation about program entitlements still constitute major barriers. Here are some facts about the two programs that may help you identify and weigh your options.

About CPP Disability Benefits

There have been positive changes in CPP Disability Benefits. Ask CPP for detailed information about them. The important thing to remember if you are weighing your CPP options is that you should keep your worker informed of any changes in your status that might affect your continuing eligibility. That is, you are required to let CPP know if your disability has improved, or of any changes in your employment status. They also reassess you periodically to see if you are still unemployable by their definition. This is a standard procedure and should not cause alarm.

It's a good idea to keep your family doctor and any specialists fully up to speed on how your disability is affecting you. You are entitled to benefits as long as your disability prevents you from regularly engaging in substantially gainful employment. CPP has defined a dollar figure above which earnings are considered substantially gainful. This figure changes each year, however, so contact CPP directly if you're not sure what it is.

While in receipt of benefits, you can do some paid work without affecting your benefits or triggering a reassessment. A recent Policy on Permissible Earnings allows you to earn up to 10% of the YMPE (yearly maximum pensionable earnings) for that year. This figure also changes each year. Check with CPP for the exact amount.

You can do volunteer work and/or attend school without fear of losing your benefits as long as you have a continuing disability. Use this to test the waters or build skills and educational credentials before taking the full plunge into the workforce. If you do complete an educational program let CPP know.

You can retain your benefits for three months after taking employment. After that, if your disability again prevents you from working you can have your application for reinstatement fast-tracked.

Although reassessment can be frightening to some, remember that it is a standard procedure. It does not necessarily lead to being cut off. Thousands of reassessed CPP Disability clients continue to receive benefits while earning income.

If you feel ready for a full return to employment and believe you could do so with proper supports, you might qualify for intensive return-to-work training, supports and services under the recently introduced CPP Disability Rehabilitation Program. This program is intended for people who might be able to get off benefits over a period of time and support themselves on employment income. Perhaps your condition has improved. Or perhaps new technology or assistive devices have changed your employment situation. Ask your worker about this program if you think you could return to work with proper and adequate supports.

Do not assume that a reassessment triggered by educational advancement or earned income will result in loss of benefits. Remember, many reassessed CPP Disability clients continue to receive benefits while earning income.

You can appeal a decision if it negatively affects your benefits. Know your appeal rights and exercise them if you need to. Review the step-by-step guidelines put out by the Saskatchewan Voice of People With Disabilities. They are clear and helpful. Three documents in particular could be of interest: the application package, the appeal package and the fact sheets. You can find these documents on-line at The Saskatchewan Voice of People with Disability Links:

Application Kit: http://www3.sk.sympatico.ca/voice/ccpguide.htm

Appeal Kit: http://www3.sk.sympatico.ca/voice/appeal.htm

Fact Sheet: http://www3.sk.sympatico.ca/voice/dias.htm

About Family Benefits

The 2000 provincial budget marked a fundamental restructuring of this program. Regulatory changes are already in effect and it is expected that new legislation will be introduced in October, 2000.

Changes to Family Benefits and Social Assistance rates and policies effective May 1, 2000

affect new clients only. Existing clients will receive the same benefits they currently receive unless the new rates are higher. This will continue until the new program is ready on April 1, 2001. All policies, including rates of assistance, are presently being reviewed, and Rates for April 1, 2001 have yet to be established.

The legislation will harmonize benefits across the previously separate municipal and provincial social assistance programs. We requested information from the department of community services concerning current provisions. Appendix II-A contains the information they provided.

Although the $18 travel allowance has been eliminated from Family Benefits, clients are able to access monies for medical and employment transportation through special needs. In most cases this amount would be higher than $18.

You are required to report income earned while on benefits. The work incentive provision that allowed earned income of $100 for singles and $200 for families without affecting benefits is now $50 and $100 respectively for new applicants. Income above this will be recovered at 100%. However, net income is counted rather than gross income.

Within the new income assistance framework special needs will be separated from income assistance. Details are not yet available. Call your local office of the Department of Community Services to find out what special needs and employment-related supports, such as childcare expenses, technical aids or assistive devices, can be covered.

Employment support services are available to Family Benefits and other income assistance clients who are job ready or could become so with help. These include career counseling vocational assessment and a variety of short courses such as job finding clubs, resume writing, labour market analysis and prior learning assessment.

The Employment Support Services division of Community Services is also collaborating with the Canada Job Transition Fund in a small pilot project involving entrepreneurs with disabilities. This will allow selected disabled entrepreneurs to retain their benefits for up to a year while getting established in a business. If you are on Family Benefits and ready to start your own business, contact Employment Support Services. Ask if the Project will be extended beyond those now participating and if you would be eligible.

You can appeal negative decisions affecting your benefits as long as you do so within thirty days. Information about appeal procedures is available on the Department of Community Services web site at:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/ABOUTTHE.HTM

Remember the current policy and program review and impending legislative changes will likely result in revisions to present provisions. You should keep in touch with your caseworker to get the latest information, as it becomes available.

Taking Care of Your Transportation Needs

Plan ahead for your transportation needs. The last thing you want is to get job interviews or a job and not be able to get there.

If you're using your own car make sure it is reliable. Have public transportation or car-pooling options lined up for emergencies. They may even be your best option. Word of mouth or local bulletin boards often turn up good car-pooling possibilities. Just make sure whatever you choose is reliable. "My car broke down" won't cut the ice if you miss interviews or are constantly late for work.

Explore ahead parking possibilities and their costs. If your disability requires it you can apply to the provincial Department of Business and Consumer Affairs for an Accessible Parking pass under the Motor Vehicle Act. You must provide a medical certificate.

If you need accessible transportation be clear in advance about your options. They range from publicly funded systems in Halifax and Sydney to volunteer, community based, accessible taxi and Dial-a-Ride services elsewhere. Consult Appendix II-B for a list of accessible transportation options in your local area.

Arranging Child Care

Reliable child-care, while often difficult to find, is a definite must if you have children too young to be on their own. Start thinking about this early. It's hard to concentrate on job finding or a job if you are constantly worried about your kids.

Responsible family members or close friends may be an option. If this is your preference, be careful about your selection and stay in touch with the quality of care your child is receiving.

Neighbours with kids the same age are sometimes valuable resources, especially for before and after-school care. Choose carefully. Make sure the person is responsible and reliable. Make informal inquiries and check formal references carefully to assure your child's safety and well being.

Check with the school to see what related child care facilities might be available. Find out whether there is lunch time supervision. At some schools there are separate but connected before and after-school child care programs that allow the child to be dropped off at 7:00 a.m. and picked up at 6:00 p.m. Be sure you have back up arrangements for storm and in-service days.

Check out local day care facilities. Low income parents who are employed, seeking work, taking training, receiving special medical treatment or have a child with special needs may qualify for subsidized day care on a sliding scale. For example, a single parent with one child and an income under $16,812 may qualify for a full subsidy; and a partial subsidy under $24,540. Two parents with two children and an income under $17,712 are eligible for a full subsidy; and a partial subsidy under $34,092.

Gathering Necessary Employment Supports

Plan early for your specific support needs. Gaining access to them takes time and persistence. It also takes knowledge of what kinds of supports are available and who funds them.

There is a complex patchwork system of public and private funding sources. Where you can go for needed supports often depends on the nature of your disability and the type and extent of supports needed. These can vary widely from one person to another. Sources will also vary according to whether you are currently employed, engaged in education or training preparatory to employment or receiving publicly or privately funded disability benefits.

Depending on a complex array of factors you may be able to access supports through your local Department of Community Services, the Department of Health or the Department of Education and Culture. Some disability-specific community organizations also provide supports specific to that disability.

Funding for training and employment supports often depends on whether you are eligible for Employment Insurance, private insurance coverage, Workers Compensation, student loans, Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities or the Opportunities Fund. Highly individualized supports such as job development and job coaching are usually only available to clients of employment service provider agencies.

It is critical to begin defining your employment support needs early. Perhaps, for example, you will need sign language interpretation for job interviews and for the first few days on the job. Or maybe you'll need attendant services, adaptive technology or other assistive devices. Whatever your specific needs, write them down. List as many of your employment support needs as you can think of.

If you are not clear about your needs, ask for help. Go to an employment service provider agency or disability organization that regularly helps people assess their employment support needs. If you are receiving Family Benefits talk to your worker about an appropriate referral. Disability advocacy organizations in your community are often good sources of help and referral as well.

Disclosing a Disability

It's a good idea to start thinking early about disclosure of your disability. If you have an invisible disability that won't affect your work, you may choose not to disclose at all. If your disability is visible or if you require workplace accommodations, it's more complicated. You'll have to decide when and how to disclose, and how to give your disability the most positive spin. Here are some things to consider:

- You may need to handle disclosure differently in different application situations, depending on the particular employer and the circumstances. Weigh the pro's and con's carefully. You'll have to judge what disclosure option will best advance your employment goal.

- More and more employers have formal or informal employment equity policies or practices. Some are specifically recruiting qualified people with disabilities. In these situations early disclosure is advantageous to both you and the employer.

- The main priority for most employers is finding people with the right skills. Remember, effective presentation of your abilities is more likely than your disability to affect the hiring decision.

- Openness and honesty are widely valued qualities. Ability to discuss your disability comfortably and suggest options for dealing with barriers will often create a very favourable impression.

- Many employers look for people who demonstrate the ability to transfer skills learned from life experience to an employment situation. Identifying the things you have learned as a result of your disability and how you would apply them to your job are great assets.

- It's often a good idea to talk with others about how they handled disclosure. You can get some good tips from those who have already been down that road.

- Some employers ask about pre-existing medical conditions. Federal and Provincial Human Rights legislation prohibits them from using this information for discriminatory purposes.

You have control over the timing of your disclosure. Use it to create a win-win situation. Be sensitive to potentially awkward or embarrassing situations that might arise. Don't, for example, arrive at an interview without forewarning that you use a wheelchair. Without knowing of the need to do otherwise, the employer may have scheduled the interviews for an inaccessible location. Employers don't like being caught off guard any more than you do.

There are different ways you can disclose:

- **On an application form**. Do this if it's an employment equity employer or if disabled workers are being specifically recruited. Sometimes organizations require you to complete a separate employment equity monitoring form. These are not used in the hiring process. They are used to measure whether the applicant pool is representative of population diversity and whether hiring decisions reflect organizational employment equity goals.

- **In a resume**. This is generally not a good idea unless it is an employment equity employer and there is no formal application form.

- **In a cover letter**. This is best if you decide to disclose early. A cover letter will allow you to bring out job-related abilities and skills you have learned specifically because of your disability. Make sure you maintain a central focus on your abilities, not your disabilities.

- **In a pre-interview contact**. Do this to prepare the employer in advance for specific access needs you will have, and thereby avoid awkwardness at the interview.

- **In a job interview**. This is often the best option unless there is clear reason to disclose earlier. A face-to-face interview allows greater creativity in convincing an employer that your disability has actually contributed positively to your value to the organization.

- **When a job offer is extended**. Use this if you have not disclosed earlier but will need some type of accommodations. Under human rights legislation an offer of employment cannot be withdrawn because of your disability unless it can be demonstrated that your disability will prevent you from fulfilling the inherent requirements of that position. The duty to accommodate has repeatedly been reaffirmed in the courts. If you experience discrimination because of disclosure of disability contact the Human Rights Commission.

Remember, you are not obliged to disclose your disability on an application. Some employers are better informed than others about disability. It's a very good idea to find out about an employer's track record before you even submit an application. This can help you decide whether, when and how to disclose.

Dealing with a Criminal Record

Disclosing a criminal record is a significant issue for some persons with disabilities. If you have a criminal record, however, all is not lost. It is just another barrier, which can be overcome.

In today's job market there are a number of companies who require that you pass a criminal record check. This does not mean that you will automatically be deselected from the screening process. It depends on a number of factors including:

- who the company is;
- what the position/job is; and
- what your offence was.

A lesson can be taken from a recent Skills Training Partnership Program. Applicants were warned that a criminal record check would be undertaken. They were asked to advise the Human Resources Manager if they had a record to determine whether this would preclude employment with the company. Some types of offenses would be tolerated but not others. Those with records who did not disclose were discovered and terminated from the program. The key here was clearly honesty and a willingness to be upfront about their record.

Think about your situation carefully. Above all be honest with the employer. Don't try to hide the facts.

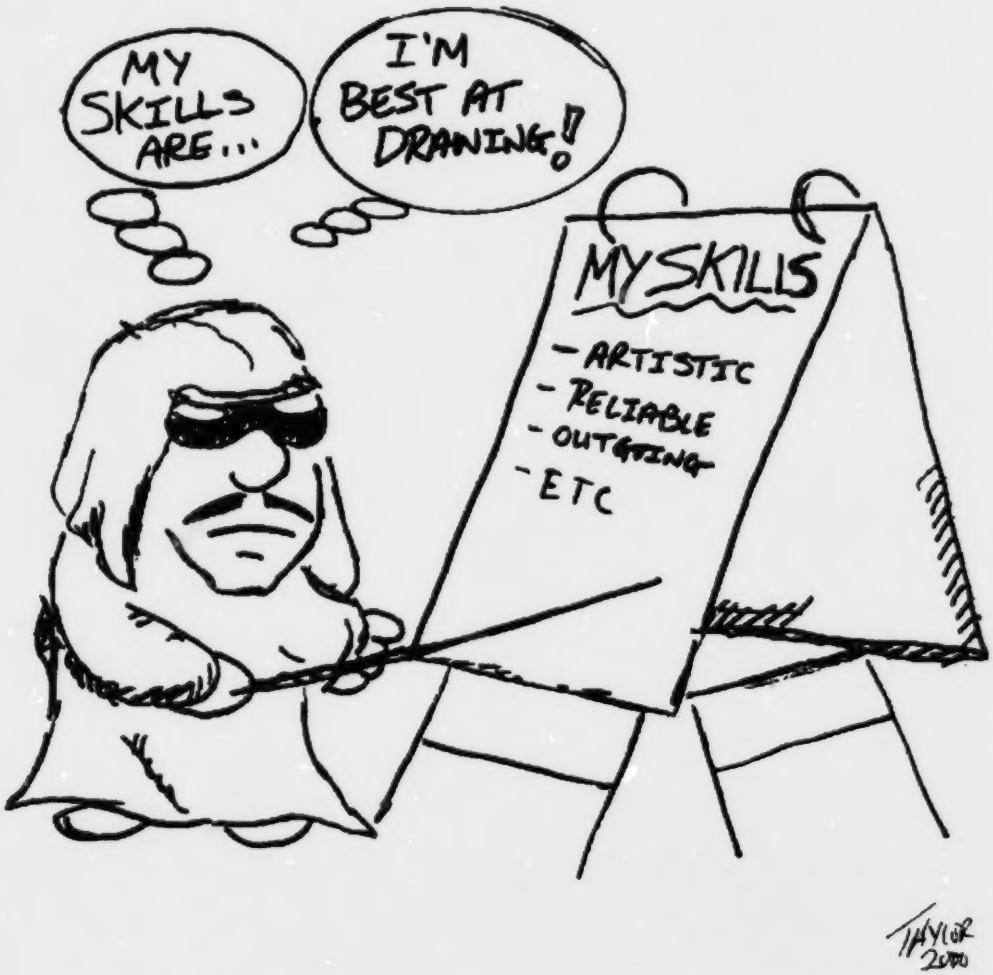
You should know as well that in some situations the National Parole Board can grant pardons. This may take time and effort but it is well worth the process. For further information on pardons you can call:

1-800-874-2652.

It is up to you whether and when to disclose but experience would suggest that honesty is the best policy!

Step 2:

Recognizing and Asserting Your Skills



Step 2:
Recognizing and Asserting Your Skills

In this step you will:

- Identify and build confidence in your own abilities;
- Understand employer expectations and evaluate your readiness to meet them and;
- Learn to express your experience and accomplishments in action language.

Does this seem demanding? Well, it will take time and thought. Rest assured, though, that it is worth doing. It will pay off in both the short and long-term. Besides keeping you focused, it will help you with the next two steps, setting realistic employment goals and writing a convincing resume.

Identifying Your Best Attributes and Skills

Knowing your positive personal attributes and skills is critical. If you are not used to tooting your own horn, this can be challenging. Remember, though, that focusing on assets you might otherwise overlook is a great way to build self-confidence.

Begin by listing your most positive personal characteristics. Write them down. What do your friends and people you know like best about you? To get started, look over the list of self-descriptive adjectives provided in Appendix II-C. Check the ones that best describe you. Get together with some friends or people who know you well. Show them the list and ask them which adjectives they think fit you best. Choose the ten or so positive attributes most characteristic of you.

Be honest. Don't pretend to be someone you're not. You have enough positive qualities that are real. Recognize and believe in them. If some attitudes and behaviours need to be improved, recognize that too. Bluffing won't work.

Don't be limited by the Toolkit's list of words. Use whatever words are most suitable. Be as clear and accurate as possible.

Now that you have identified your most positive personal attributes, you are ready to develop an inventory of skills you could offer a potential employer. There are two types of skills to think about. Basic transferable skills, often called general employability skills, are essential for every type of work and at every organizational level. Ability to communicate clearly, act cooperatively, plan effectively and set priorities are examples. You learn these skills in many ways, including life experience. Despite their importance people tend to overlook these skills in themselves. Don't fall into this trap.

Job-specific skills are particular competencies that vary across jobs. The more specialized the job the more important these become. For example, if you want to be a nurse or a physiotherapist you require specialized technical skills. Lots of jobs utilize technical competencies that are applicable across several types of work. If you want to be a secretary you'll need to be able to type and operate various kinds of office equipment, including computers. But these same skills can be used in other types of work as well.

Identify and document all your skills, from your most generalized employability skills to your most specialized job-specific ones. List them all. Don't leave any out. You can narrow and refine the list later. Refer to the list of possible skills provided in Appendix II-D. It is not intended to be exhaustive but will remind you of skills you have developed.

You already have a head start on your skills inventory. Review the list of barriers and successful solutions you created in Step 1. There! You already have some documented achievements to work with. Think about what you learned by overcoming these barriers. Write down every skill you learned. Make a complete list of them. If, for example, you convinced a reluctant landlord to make some accessibility modifications in your apartment, how did you do it? Did your accomplishment demonstrate good verbal communication skills, effective interpersonal skills, and good negotiating skills? Or if you regularly manage to juggle the conflicting demands of child-care and your community work despite the unpredictability of accessible transportation, are you demonstrating organizational or management skills? If you helped someone deal with discrimination did you exercise advocacy and conflict resolution skills? If you have been able to manage on a social assistance income, have you shown excellent budgeting skills? Think about every skill you have learned from dealing with barriers and write them all down. If your mind goes blank when you sit down to do your list, don't worry. It happens to a lot of us. Refer to the list of possible skills in Appendix II-D. It may spark some ideas.

It takes time to identify your skills. Don't try to rush it. Just get a few fridge magnets and post your list where you can add to it whenever you think of skills you have learned.

Use this same process to extract the skills you have learned from everything else you have done. Start by making a list of your education and training, paid and volunteer work, community and committee involvement, contributions to helping family and friends, work on specific projects, participation in team sports or other group activities - anything relevant you've done. Make sure your list is complete. For each major type of past activity, list what you did, what you accomplished and the skills you learned. It often helps to make separate lists for different kinds of activities. This way you can compare the lists later and look for patterns. Be sure to list both your achievements through these activities and the skills you developed by engaging in them.

You can get professional help developing your portfolio of significant accomplishments and marketable skills. Employment service providers can assist you. Also, throughout Nova Scotia the Community College system delivers short courses and workshops designed by the Prior Learning Assessment Centre for this purpose. If you want help contact the Centre or your nearest Community College campus. The Centre's web site contains course descriptions and schedules.

http://www.placentre.ns.ca

Assessing Readiness to Meet Employer Expectations

Now that you have developed an inventory of positive personal assets and skills, evaluate your skills against employer expectations. Employers look for both general employability and job-specific skills. Most often, though, they consider general employability skills more critical. Except where prior technical skills are essential, employers will often assume people with good basic transferable skills will readily acquire or at least fine tune job-specific skills on the job.

The Conference Board of Canada studied the expectations of Canadian employers. They grouped their expressed priorities into three broad categories:

- Academic skills;
- Personal management skills; and
- Teamwork skills.

This framework is very widely known and used. Here is what Canadian employers have defined as important. Listed for each of the skills are indicators an employer might look for in assessing you.

Go over the list carefully. Get familiar with the expectations you'll be facing. Think about what they might mean in concrete terms. Use your list of positive personal attributes and inventory of skills to check off the ones you already have. List what you think might be possible ways of demonstrating that you have these skills. Note carefully any areas in which your skills need improvement. Make a list of them too so you can start working on them.

Academic Skills

These are the skills that provide the basic foundation enabling you to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results. Canadian employers say they need a person who can:

Communicate

- Understand and speak the languages in which business is conducted;

- Listen to understand and learn;
- Read, comprehend and use written materials, including graphs, charts and displays;
- Write effectively in the languages in which business is conducted.

Think

- Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions;
- Understand and solve problems involving basic mathematics and use the results;
- Use technology, instruments, tools and information systems effectively;
- Access and apply specialized knowledge from various fields (e.g. skilled trades, technology, physical sciences, arts and social sciences).

Learn

- Continue to learn for life.

Personal Management Skills

These are a combination of skills, attitudes and behaviours that are required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results. Canadian employers say they need people who can demonstrate:

Positive Attitudes and Behaviours

- Self-esteem and confidence;
- Honesty, integrity and personal ethics;
- A positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health;
- Initiative, energy and persistence to get the job done.

Responsibility

- The ability to set goals and priorities in work and personal life;
- The ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals;
- Accountability for actions taken.

Adaptability

- A positive attitude toward change;
- Recognition of and respect for people's diversity and individual differences;
- The ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get the job done;
- Creativity.

Teamwork Skills

These are the skills needed to work effectively with others on a job and to achieve the best results. Canadian employers say they need people who can:

- Work with others;
- Understand and contribute to the organization's goals;
- Understand and work within the culture of the group;
- Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes;
- Respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the group;
- Exercise "give and take" to achieve group results;
- Seek a team approach as appropriate;
- Lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance.

Get familiar with these employer expectations. Compare your own skills inventory with them. Evaluate where you already have the skills employers value and where your skills need improvement. List carefully any skill gaps that need to be filled.

Expressing Experience and Accomplishments in Action Language

Action verbs that describe your work experience and activities as achievements are most effective in selling your skills. Employers know that previous successes are the best predictors of future potential. Frame all your work experience and other important activities as crisp action

statements. Besides giving context to your accomplishments, action statements communicate your skills effectively and highlight your past successes.

Use concise phrasing rather than complete sentences to describe your experiences and achievements. Make every statement succinct and to the point. Where possible, quantify your successes.

Review the lists of work experience, volunteer work and other activities you made in the last exercise. Now it's time to turn your list into positive action statements you can use in your resume.

Frame your successful job, volunteer and other activities in strong action language. You want the employer to know they were successful actions you took, not just things that happened to you. Suppose, for example, your list of past activities includes four years of volunteer work with Meals-on-Wheels. You want to make this experience count in your favour. Here are two ways of reporting that experience. Which version do you think is more likely to attract an employer's attention?

Version 1:

"I was a volunteer for Meals-on-Wheels from 1992 to 1996. I started as a driver and worked up to a supervisory job. I helped the Director set up the delivery schedules and routes. I was responsible for assigning drivers to three of the routes. I was also responsible for finding new volunteers and for training and supervising them."

Version 2:

"Volunteer, Meals-on-Wheels, 1992-1996:

Assisted director, established delivery routes and schedules and assigned drivers to three routes; recruited, trained and supervised new volunteers."

The second version is much more concise and action oriented, and highlights important skills you have a right to claim because of the experience.

Let's take one more example. Suppose you held a part-time job as a grocery store cashier while attending university. You could communicate skills derived from this experience as follows:

"Part-time cashier, Sobey's, 1996-1999.

Provided reliable check-out services and regularly balanced cash register at close of shift; Maintained excellent customer relationships; Worked well under pressure.

In these examples you are eliminating unnecessary words, citing actions you know employers value and communicating confidence in the skills you have learned.

Complete this exercise for your past activities. For each one listed name what you accomplished and frame it in action verbs. Refer to the list of action verbs included in Appendix II-E. These will remind you of skills you have learned and help you express them effectively.

If you have a computer to surf the web, the University of Minnesota has an excellent on-line tutorial to help you describe your accomplishments effectively in action language. Go to their web site and complete their on-line exercises:

http://www.umn.edu/ohr/ecep/resume/3E.htm

Now that you have identified your most positive personal attributes and skills and compared them with employer expectations, and framed your experience and activities in effective action language, you are probably beginning to crystallize in your own mind the direction you want to take in finding employment. You are ready now to go on to specifying realistic employment goals and devising an effective action plan. If the exercises you have done have revealed significant skill gaps, don't be discouraged. You can make closing these gaps the first priority in your action plan.

Step 3:
Defining Realistic Goals and Employment Plans

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Realistic goals are key to an effective employment strategy. Planning and goal setting, therefore, will be the focus of this step.

Both planning and goal setting are heavily dependent on sound and up-to-date information. We will direct you to current print and on-line information sources relevant to these tasks. We will include, as well, guidelines for updating your information base so you can keep pace with changes and new demands.

Importance of Goals

The importance of having clear goals cannot be overstated. Why are they so important? Well, if you don't have goals you're likely to end up going in circles. Can you think of anything more discouraging and frustrating? It's your goals and concrete action plans that motivate you and keep your employment journey focused and on track.

Goals represent your ultimate destination and essential stops along the way. Action plans provide the map, guiding you from stop to stop and on to that final destination, the job you want.

Setting Your Goals

You will need to define short term, intermediate and long-term goals. Keep them flexible and adaptable to circumstances that change along the way. At the same time make them clear and specific enough to guide you, and measurable so you know when you've achieved them. It's wonderful to feel the satisfaction of even small achievements. They're great motivators. Define sequential goals so that each leads to the next and together they lead to your desired employment outcome.

It's best to start out by clarifying your long-term goals. Think about what you really want your career to be. Let yourself dream a bit. You'll have lots of opportunity later to temper your dreams with a healthy dose of reality but for now, just let your imagination go. Visualize yourself in your ideal job. Write it down. In fact, write down all the employment possibilities that really excite you. Review the marketable skills and positive personal attributes you identified in Step 2. How would you really like to put them to use? The very act of writing down your end goals will help you define and clarify them. It will also get you thinking systematically about shorter-term goals and activities that will be involved in reaching them.

Beside each long-term goal write down what instrumental goals will be required in order to reach it. Let's suppose, for example, you have a real knack with computers. You would love to

make a career in this field but need some formal training. Perhaps some courses or a training program would be a necessary interim goal. Now break your training goal down into smaller goals. What steps will be needed to get into and cover the costs of appropriate training? What would be your instrumental goals and activities for today, this week, this month? Write them all down so that for each desirable outcome you have sketched out a series of attainable and measurable interim goals leading to it. What concrete activities must you carry out to reach each goal?

Yes, it's important to write down all your goals and associated activities leading from immediate to long-term goals. You need a map that is clear and specific if you are to stay focused. Each goal you realize along the way will bring you satisfaction and increased confidence. Together your small successes will move you systematically towards the big one, that job you want!

It really helps to keep a daily log of activities you will undertake in reaching your goals. Prioritize these activities and set time frames for completing them. If one of your goals for this week is to arrange child-care so you can undertake training or a job search, what will you do today, tomorrow, the next day towards realizing that goal. If your goal is to work on a particular skill you need to improve, specifically what steps will you take to achieve this and by when? Write it all down and mark off each activity as you complete it. Take pride in each small goal you reach. Writing down your goals and figuring out how you will reach them will make them happen. Never lose sight of the reason for these small goals and activities. They are your path to the bigger goal, your desired employment outcome. Keeping this in mind will make each small success that much more meaningful and satisfying.

The Local Labour Market

Understanding your local labour market is critical to realistic planning and goal-setting. The Toolkit Resource Manual provides an overview of current conditions and projected growth trends around the Province. Review it to help you define more clearly the art of the possible in your own field of interest.

Labour market conditions, however, are quite fluid. You need to know how to keep abreast of important changes. Unless you do, you won't know when and how to adjust your employment goals and strategy. Regular refinement of your employment goals in light of new realities is a big part of effective goal setting and employment planning.

There are several ways you can access up-to-date labour market information. Don't forget the library. You'll find a wealth of information there. You can also go to your nearest Human

Resource Centre. Their locations are listed in Appendix II-F. An on-line list of Nova Scotia HRC's and what they offer is also available at:

http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/service/service.htm

Ask for the latest labour market information available.

You can get help interpreting labour market information from most community employment service providers. A directory of such service providers is available from the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission or on their web site at:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/disa/ERD.HTM

There is plenty of regularly updated on-line labour market information. Human Resources Development Canada maintains a vast array of such information on its Nova Scotia web site. Updated labour market news is published each month at:

Http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/lmi/lmn/index.htm

You can also get labour market reviews updated yearly. These give general summaries as well as detailed labour market information for each HRDC Zone in the Province. Check at:

Http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/lmi/lmrjump.htm

Summaries of Nova Scotia occupations will give you work descriptions, employment prospects, wages and list of potential employers. These are very useful if you are uncertain about whether you would be qualified for an occupation in which you are interested. The lists might also reveal occupational possibilities that you would otherwise completely overlook. You can search for occupations alphabetically or by National Occupation Classification Codes if you are familiar with them. This resource is a great way to refine your employment goals. Check at:

Http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/lmi/occsums/occsums.htm

Information is provided on wage rates for hundreds of occupations around the Province. You can search for wage rates for particular occupations either alphabetically or using the National Occupational Classification Code. This is handy when you are evaluating your options and choosing a career path.

Http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/lmi/wage/ns_wage.htm

You can also obtain all sorts of interesting and important population and employment-related statistics at:

Http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/lmi/stats/index.htm

The HRDC site also provides Community profiles giving detailed information on communities throughout the Province. You can get, among other things, unemployment rates and links to important organizations in the community. This includes local disability organizations where you can get assistance with your planning from people who understand the realities of your disability. Try:

Http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/lmi/cprofile/CProfile.asp

Besides the HRDC web sites, a new and very rich source of on-line information about all aspects of job finding, including labour market and other employment related information was launched at the end of May, 2000. It will direct you to resources on jobs, work and recruiting; occupations and careers; learning, education and training; labour market conditions and outlooks; self-employment; and financial support and issues. Links specific to disability are planned but are not yet operational at the time of writing. Visit this important site at:

http://www.workinfonet.ca

Be sure to visit these sites frequently when you are defining or redefining employment goals and constructing a plan. Good labour market and other employment-related information is critical to sound and realistic planning.

Education and Training Options

You have carried out a self-assessment of your marketable skills and personal assets. You have reviewed the types of skills employers are looking for and analyzed local labour market opportunities. If these combined exercises have revealed skill gaps, or even new skill sets that could bring you closer to your "dream" job, by all means build education or training into your employment strategy.

The world of work has changed radically in recent years. Employers are demanding more and different skills. In fact, willingness and ability to regularly upgrade skills through life long learning are now a must for career success and satisfaction. Take seriously the training imperatives of the occupation or profession you really want to pursue. Explore and act upon those options that represent your ticket to employment satisfaction and financial reward.

Educational and training options are many and varied. Perhaps you need only a course or two targeted to the development or upgrading of specific skills. Perhaps your dream leads you towards a community college or university program. Whatever path you decide upon, remember that it will enhance your occupational opportunities if chosen wisely. That is the key, choosing

wisely! Review your options with your eye firmly fixed on what you need to achieve your desired employment outcome. Once again, let goal clarity keep you on track.

The newly launched Nova Scotia WORKINFONET site (NSWIN) has valuable information on just about every type of educational and training option available in Nova Scotia. If pursuing a university degree is what you want, this site will give you direct links to all Nova Scotia universities and describe what they offer. Go to:

Http://www.ns.workinfonet.ca/english/index.cfm?cat=3&sub=30

There are also links to the thirteen campuses of the Nova Scotia Community College System, again describing what programs are available at each:

Http://www.ns.workinfonet.ca/english/index.cfm?cat=3&sub=31

There is information as well about Nova Scotia's private career colleges. Approximately 95 such private schools are currently registered to offer skills training for adults in many fields such as massage therapy, truck driving, information technology, esthetics, multimedia, travel and tourism, natural health, and business education.

Http://pcc.ednet.ns.ca/

There are, of course, many types of apprenticeships available as well. The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Training Division administers the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act. It is responsible for the development and maintenance of apprenticeship and certification examinations. If you are interested in some type of apprenticeship contact the Division for information.

Many continuing education programs either at the community or university level provide courses and certificate programmes of various types, including counselling, computer, business and a host of others. Community continuing education is usually provided at moderate cost and accessible in the evenings or sometimes weekends.

Educational and training options are far too extensive and varied to cover fully here. They do exist, however, and may be just what you need to reach your employment goals. Don't dismiss any options that could help you!

Funding for Education and Training

"So", you are asking, "how could I possibly finance education or training?" Well, there are some possibilities. The likely source of funding will depend on several factors. Here are a few common sources.

Persons eligible for Workers Compensation may have their tuition and other training costs covered, as well as necessary technical aids and assistive devices. The same is true of persons covered by the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

Students with disabilities who qualify for a federal or provincial student loan may also qualify for a Canada Study Grant of up to $5,000. This is to defray the special disability-related costs of education. It may be used for such requirements as technical aids, interpreter services and attendant services. It is not available for capital costs such as purchase of a van or building modification. You will be required to provide evidence of your disability.

If you are receiving income support under provincial income assistance (formerly Family Benefits or Municipal Social Assistance) you may be able to qualify for a special training allowance and defray some of your education/training costs through funding from the Employability Assistance for People With Disabilities Program (EAPD) or the Opportunities Fund. Information about these programs is provided in Appendices II-G and II-H. Consult your caseworker to determine if you would be eligible for these.

Students with disabilities entering post-secondary and other formal educational programs who do not qualify for student loans may qualify for assistance under EAPD or the Opportunities Fund. Necessary technical aids and assistive devices up to the maximum allowable will be covered. See Appendix II-G and II-H for further details on these two programs.

There are other less common sources of educational funding as well. If you plan to begin an educational or training program be sure to explore what might be available to you.

Employment Options

If your skills assessment and review of the labour market reveal that you are ready to pursue employment immediately, your employment goals and strategy will be more focused on the immediate steps involved in finding the right job for you. This, of course, will involve preparation of a resume, conducting a thorough job search and getting ready for job interviews. The next three steps in this Toolkit will be dedicated to helping you map out these instrumental goals and the action plans you will need in order to reach them.

Step 4:
Writing a Convincing Resume

Step 4:
Writing a Convincing Resume

Now that you have defined employment goals and developed an action plan you are ready to write a convincing resume. Your resume provides a golden opportunity to sell your skills to a potential employer. In fact, you have already done much of the necessary background work. In Steps 1 through 3 you have identified your best personal attributes, documented your significant educational, employment, volunteer and other past experiences and achievements and listed the skills you have to offer. The focus in this step will be on presenting these effectively.

Here are some important things to think about and guidelines to follow in preparing your resume.

Purpose and Importance of a Resume

A resume is a one page statement highlighting what you can offer a prospective employer. It is a snapshot of your qualifications, skills and abilities. Make every word count. Don't go over one page unless you have tons of very impressive credentials. Even then, don't go beyond two pages! Employers typically spend about thirty seconds scanning a resume. They will pass over resumes that are too long or contain irrelevant information.

Employers want people whose skills fit their job requirements. Saying succinctly and clearly who you are and what you can do is a definite must. Remember, your resume is your first contact. It must immediately peak an employer's interest if you want a job interview. It can make or break you in a stiff competition.

What to Include

You'll need to make some strategic choices. Always keep in mind the reason you are preparing a resume. You want to convince an employer you are the best one for the job. Stick to information that will do this, and don't waste a single word.

Remember that employers use resumes to screen applicants. Only applicants with very promising resumes will be short-listed for interviews.

There are no hard and fast rules about what you must include. This will vary somewhat depending on how much and what kind of experience you have. The following are categories of information employers are used to seeing:

Contact Information

This, of course, is a must for every resume. It should come right at the beginning. Give your name, your full mailing address including postal code, your phone number and a fax number or e-mail address if you have one. You don't need to give your age unless there is some clear advantage in doing so. Be sure the phone number you give is one where you can be reached during the day, as this is when most calls come. If your job search makes it impossible to be near your own phone for long periods, give the phone number of someone reliable who can take messages for you. Be sure to check with that person regularly so you can return calls promptly. Remember, if you can't easily be reached you risk losing to someone else who can be.

An Employment Objective

This can be very useful. If you include one it should come just after your contact information and should set out in one meaty sentence what you want to do and how this would benefit the employer. A good objective will demonstrate that you have done your homework and know what the employer wants. Make your objective clear, simple and specific. Frame it in words oriented to the employers needs. Avoid being self-centred. Remember, you want the objective to be an eye-catcher that grabs the employer's interest.

Employment objectives usually include some or all of the following elements:

- The type of position you are seeking, and whether you want to work full or part time. If you are responding to a specific job posting use the advertised position title. Otherwise frame the type of work in terms broad enough to encompass positions for which the employer normally recruits;
- The general field or type of organization in which you hope to work;
- The personal assets and skills you could bring to the job you are seeking. Select the most relevant ones from those you identified in your Step 2 skills assessment. Communicate them strongly and confidently; and
- The potential benefit of your contribution to the organization.

Here are a couple of examples of employment objectives that incorporate these elements:

"A full-time secretarial position in a medical setting using my extensive clerical experience, excellent command of medical terminology and strong computer skills to provide effective clerical supports";

"Full-time or part-time work as a researcher in a public or private organization using my extensive research background and strong analytic, leadership and team-building skills to design and implement a viable research program."

Don't include a hollow objective such as :
"To develop my skills in a challenging job where advancement and professional growth will be possible".

It is self-oriented and says nothing at all about what benefit you would contribute.

Summary of Qualifications

These is an especially useful section to include if you have little formal work experience and want to call attention to significant abilities developed in other ways. Use it to highlight life accomplishments, including successful management of your disability. Choose the most relevant from your previously developed list of positive personal assets and skills inventory. Examples might be: "excellent interpersonal skills", "demonstrated leadership ability", "good problem solving skills", "ability to work under pressure", "superior organizational skills", "good team player", etc. Be sure the rest of your resume backs up what you claim.

Computer skills are big assets so if you have them be sure to mention them in your section on qualifications. The more software packages you know the better. Internet literacy is a definite plus!

Don't make your summary any longer than about four or five crisp phrases or sentences. Sharp bullet statements are very useful and make your abilities stand out nicely.

Education and Training

List your formal education with years, usually in reverse chronological order. Include as well any relevant certificates or other credentials you have earned, trades training or on-the-job training. Don't forget computer or other job-related courses you have taken. You want the employer to realize you have mastered learning relevant to the job you are seeking. Point out any special ways your education and training have equipped you for the job responsibilities.

Work Experience

If you have lots of work experience put this section before your education. Most employers rely heavily on past experience to predict future performance. Your challenge is to crystallize and frame positively the very best of your work history. Use the powerful action statements you developed in Step 2 to capture and communicate your achievements. If you want to add to these,

review again the action verbs in Appendix II-E. They will jog your memory about your best accomplishments and help you communicate them persuasively.

There are different resume formats for describing your experience. Employers are most used to a reverse chronological format covering the previous five years or so. This means listing your previous jobs and years with the most recent on the top and the earliest on the bottom. This format works very well for people who have had steady employment or important job titles. It is especially easy for an employer to evaluate quickly.

A chronological format may not be the best format for you if you have little formal work experience or have significant employment gaps due to your disability. You'll need a format that shifts the focus away from job titles and dates and onto meaningful achievements and skills you do have. In this situation try a functional format. This minimizes dates and summarizes the functions you have carried out in the past (including volunteer work and life experience). It puts the focus squarely on significant accomplishments and transferrable skills learned. Your trusty lists prepared in Step 2 will once again pave the way for preparing a resume in a functional format.

Select only the experiences and achievements most relevant to the type of work you are pursuing. Be choosy about what you include. You don't need to give your whole life history. Too much detail will overflow the one page limit!

Some job seekers like to use a flexible combination of both the chronological and functional formats. This will outline jobs and job responsibilities you have had in reverse chronological order, and indicate for each job your major accomplishments and transferrable skills learned. Be sure your achievements are couched in appropriate action language.

Choose a format that best fits your employment goal and individual circumstances. The key, whatever the format, is to sell your abilities to the employer. Remember, you want to persuade an employer that the great things you have done in the past suggest great things you could do in the future!

Take a look at the sample resume in Appendix II-I. It may help you decide what format to use and how best to communicate your strengths in your resume.

Professional/Community Activities

This is a good way to supplement your section on work experience, especially if your paid work experience is thin. Stick to activities relevant to the type of job you're after, and focus on real achievements. (For example, you might name contributions to relevant professional associations in which you hold membership or office, involvement in community organizations

or volunteer work, etc.). Indicate the name of the organization and your role and, most important of all, your accomplishments and transferable skills learned. For example:

"Volunteer, Metro food Bank, 1997 - 2000. Created information brochure, coordinated liaison with contributing organizations, participated in fund-raising activities"; or

"Member, Lions Club, 1995-present. Evaluated funding proposals, organized special children's events".

Don't forget to couch your accomplishments in successful actions you have performed.

Interests/Hobbies

Interests are usually unstructured, involving such activities as reading, music, gardening, painting, etc. Some people include them as evidence of being well-rounded persons. A better guideline is to select interests or hobbies that have resulted in marketable skill development. For example, if you are an avid reader, suggest how this has improved your spelling and increased your written and verbal communication skills. If you love to surf the net, explain how this has increased your internet literacy.

Choosing References Wisely

Employers almost always require two or three confidential references. Previous employers, volunteer supervisors, instructors or others familiar with your work make good references. Be sure to get permission before using a referee's name. If you have not worked before try asking an employment counsellor for a reference or ask some other professional who knows you well to provide a character reference. Don't use friends or family members. Choose references the employer will be sure to find credible.

Don't name your references in your resume unless an employer has specifically asked for this. Simply indicate in the resume that references are available on request. List the names on a separate page. Include for each reference an address, telephone number, their position or title and the capacity in which they have known you. This way you can easily produce them on request and update them without rewriting your resume. You may even want to have more than one reference list, tailoring them to particular job openings.

Appearance, Grammar and Style

Your resume is a reflection of you. If you want it to be taken seriously, pay attention to appearance, grammar and style. Here are some important points to remember:

- Make your resume look highly professional and visually attractive. In the mind of a potential employer you are only as good as your resume looks. If you plan to mail your resume or distribute it in person you can dress it up with larger font sizes and appropriate bolding for headings, italics for particular emphases and leader dots for bullet statements. There are different rules for electronic formats which we will discuss a bit later.

- Space your resume so it fits nicely on the page. Print it on good quality 8 1/2" by 11" paper. Use a laser printer if possible. You want to be sure the print is clear and pleasing to the eye.

- Keep your resume simple, straightforward and to the point. Employers won't waste time on details that don't matter.

- Make it easy to read; use a clear font style in a 12 to 14 point size.

- Make the layout easy to follow. This means identifying section headings clearly. Make sure the information within each section is lined up properly and can be skimmed quickly. Bullets contribute visual variety and differentiation within sections.

- Avoid using a lot of block print in the body of the resume and don't underline. These make the resume too busy and hard to read.

- Check and double check and triple check to be sure there are no spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Get someone you trust who is really good at proof-reading to go through it for you with a fine tooth comb. Nothing will turn an employer off more quickly than poor grammar and incorrect spelling.

- Avoid using abbreviations and acronyms with which the employer may not be familiar. It is irritating to be presented with meaningless acronyms. Spell it out so the employer knows exactly what you're talking about.

- Demonstrate that you pay attention to detail. This always makes a good impression. Be sure your presentation is consistent throughout. If you bold one section heading, make sure they are all bolded. If you add punctuation at the end of one bullet statement, do it for all. Consistency of presentation is very important.

Electronic Resume Formats

These days you can easily reach a much broader circle of potential employers by preparing your resume so that it can be scanned or submitted electronically. You don't have to write a whole new resume. Just modify the presentation so that the electronic media can handle it

effectively. Let's look at a few instances where electronic formats are useful, and some resume preparation guidelines for each:

Preparing Resumes for Scanning

Many larger employers are automating their hiring process. Resumes are processed by resume processing computer software rather than by a person. But scanners have limitations on what print they can handle.

You can't use the highly decorative and stylized presentations appropriate to mailed resumes. Before sending resumes to large companies find out if their screening is automated. If so, follow these guidelines:

- Print your resume on white paper. Coloured paper does not scan well.
- Include a few keywords descriptive of the type of work you are seeking and your qualifications. This will ensure your resume gets into the proper database.
- Use plain print, no fancy fonts, italics or underlining.
- Use asterisks (*) instead of leader dots or other graphical symbols to set up bullet statements. Graphics present problems when scanning.
- Send originals rather than copies. They scan more easily and clearly.

Submission by e-mail

Lots of employers accept resumes by e-mail. Sometimes they will even require this in their job postings. Here are some guidelines for e-mail submission:

- Check first to be sure e-mail is acceptable to an employer.
- Be sure to include a subject line that identifies clearly what you are looking for. If you are responding to an actual job posting name the exact position title and reference number from the posting.
- Save your resume as a plain text (ASCII) computer file and include it in the body of the e-mail message. This means no bolding, no underlining, no graphics of any kind – just plain text. Set your margins so the resume will fit into the e-mail message – no more than 65 characters wide. Offer to provide a printed copy as well for the employer's records.
- Be creative about how to make your resume attractive in plain text format. Techniques similar to those for scanning will work. Use block print to distinguish section headings. Use asterisks (*) to set up bullet statements.

- E-mail your resume to yourself before sending it out. Be sure there are no formatting problems and it looks attractive in e-mail format.

- Include your cover letter in the same e-mail as your resume. We'll talk more about cover letters a bit later.

- Don't send your resume and cover letter as an e-mail attachment. Employers won't take time to download attachments or convert file formats incompatible with their own word processing software.

Posting on the Internet:

There are several places on the internet where you can post an abbreviated resume for wide distribution. Some local examples include:

The HRDC Electronic Labour Exchange:

http://www.ele-spe.org/index.html

The CCRW Web Access Employment Network:

http://www.waen.org/eng.html

Most on-line databases have pre-set formats into which you plug the appropriate information. The plain text file you created for e-mail submission can usually be cut and pasted quite easily into the form provided.

There are some excellent on-line resources to help you prepare your resume. Try these:

Ten Essesntials: http://www.on.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/phd/programs/eyg/home.htm

The Resume Place: http://www.resume-place.com// (note the two slashes at the end)

eResumes and Resources: http://www.eresumes.com

Damn Good Resumes: http://www.damngood.com

Customizing Dynamic Cover Letters

A dynamic cover letter must always accompany your resume. Write an individual letter specially tailored to each job application. A form letter won't do!

Highlight your skills, experiences, abilities, and career interests that make you a perfect fit for that job. Speak directly and personally to what you understand the employer is looking for in an ideal employee.

Like your resume, your cover letter must be perfect in terms of spelling, punctuation, grammar and appearance. It represents you and is a sample of your writing abilities. You want it to create a very favourable first impression of you.

Your cover letter should consist of about three to five paragraphs and fit comfortably on one page. Print it on the same colour and good quality paper you used for your resume. Don't forget to sign it and note at the bottom that your resume is enclosed.

Your cover letter should contain the following elements:

- Your street address, city, province, and postal code;
- The date;
- The employer's name and title, the name of the organization, the city, province and postal code;
- A salutation (Dear . . .). Address it to a specific person if at all possible. Call the company and find out the person's name. Use "Mr." or "Ms.". If you're unable to get a name you can use "Dear Sir/Madam". Be careful not to assume whether the person is male or female!
- An introductory paragraph that identifies the position for which you are applying or about which you are inquiring, any advertisement or job posting to which you are responding or a particular person who referred you if there is one;
- One to three paragraphs that make up the main body of the letter. These should set out why you are interested in that position or the company, qualifications and accomplishments pertinent to to the position and the employers needs, some concrete examples of relevant skills and achievements, and what you could contribute to the employer;
- A closing paragraph stating what you know and really like about the employer/company and why you would like to be part of their team. Express your appreciation for their time and your interest in having a personal meeting or an interview. Give a phone number where you can be reached;
- A closing salutation such as "Yours sincerely" and your name. "Enclosure:" comes after your name on the left margin.

Take care in preparing your cover letters. They are extremely influential in shaping an employer's response to your application. A sample cover letter is included in Appendix II-J. Use it as a guide if you find it helpful.

Final Resume Checklist

Now that you have a resume you are ready to move on to Step 4 and begin your job search in earnest. First, though, let's just do one final check to make sure everything is in order. Take a critical look at what you have done using the checklist below, and have someone else do the same thing!

- Does your resume look professional, well organized and polished, fitting comfortably on a page without looking squeezed or scant?
- Does it reveal at a glance your very best attributes, abilities and skills?
- Is it logical and consistent throughout?
- Does it bring out clearly and present convincingly your most important accomplishments?
- Have you corrected absolutely every punctuation, spelling or grammatical error?
- Is it complete and current in the information provided?
- Is it action-oriented in its overall presentation?
- Is it likely to peak an employer's interest in giving you an interview?
- Have you used a format appropriate to your particular situation and the method you will use to distribute it?

If the answer to all these questions is yes, you are ready to move on to Step 5. If not, go back to the drawing board and get it right before proceeding further!

Step 5:
Conducting A Creative Job Search

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If you have completed the first four steps outlined earlier, you are already well on your way towards a creative and successful job search. You have identified and planned for how to deal with potential barriers and problematic personal circumstances. You have recorded your important marketable assets, skills and significant achievements. You have expressed these succinctly and persuasively in an eye-catching resume. Finally, you have specified your employment goals and planned a strategy for pursuing them. Now let's put that strategy to work!

A creative job search encompasses much more than just reviewing the daily classifieds and other formal job postings. Your strategy will need to include as well ways to penetrate the huge hidden job market. Here you will require such techniques as networking, contacting employment service providers, surfing the net and possibly even volunteer work. Any and all of these tools can be useful components of a focused job search strategy.

Your job search should systematically explore every possible avenue and leave no stone unturned. In this step we will focus on a wide range of tools relevant to your job search.

Pursuing Formal Job Listings

Checking the classifieds for the type of work you are seeking is a good starting point. These usually list education and skill requirements. Check the specified requirements against your list of assets and skills developed in Step 2. If you see a reasonable match be sure to submit an application immediately. Don't wait. If you wait, someone else will get there first. Competition is usually quite stiff for the relatively few jobs that are advertised.

If at all possible, it's a good idea to subscribe to the daily newspaper while you are doing a job search. This will give you immediate access to the classifieds. Be sure to read them early in the morning. This will spur you on and allow you to be the early bird that gets the worm.

If you are not in a position to personally subscribe to the newspaper, there are other ways to access the classifieds. Your local library will carry newspapers for most major cities and towns. If you have a computer and Internet access, you can access the classifieds at home from the HRDC web site for Nova Scotia or your own region. The HRDC Nova Scotia web address is:

http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/jobs/jobs.htm

In addition to giving you direct access to the classified ads, this site will provide access to job postings at the various Human Resource Centres around the Province. Visit your nearest Human

Resource Centre or employment service agency for help in tapping the formal job market. Ask an employment counsellor to help you locate and respond to relevant job postings.

While reviewing formal job listings and advertisements pay careful attention to how employers are describing their skill requirements for your kind of work. Keep a list of them. Notice what kind of language employers are using. Notice as well which skill requirements are turning up most frequently. This can be enormously helpful in deciding how to describe your own skills and attributes. If the job posting leads you to believe you are qualified for the job, you can only better your chances of success by using the language employers understand and want to hear.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. If you see more than one job listing for which you feel qualified, apply for all. Be careful to follow any and all instructions in the job posting. Some companies will have standard application forms they want you to use. Others merely invite you to submit a resume. Do exactly what is asked. If you fail to follow instructions at this point employers are likely to conclude you will not follow them in other situations.

Using the Library

Your local library can be a wonderful resource. Don't overlook it in your job search. It contains a wealth of relevant information. For example you can find:

- Daily newspapers from a variety of geographic locations;
- Trade journals or professional magazines relevant to your employment interests;
- Books and references on job search techniques;
- Directories of employers and major business organizations in your area;
- Directories of government departments and resources;
- Descriptions and educational requirements for various occupations;
- Wage rates for various occupational groupings.

These are only a few of the many important resources you can access through the library. Enlist the help of a librarian. Librarians are used to sifting through the vast and sometimes complex array of materials available. You want to pull out those most relevant to your particular job search. Remember, good research is the key to success.

Tapping the Hidden Job Market

It is impossible to overstate the importance of tapping the hidden job market. In fact, employment experts tell us that only about fifteen to twenty percent of available jobs are actually advertised. The vast majority, at least four out of every five job opportunities, are found in the hidden job market. In some rural areas tapping the hidden job market can be the only way to find employment.

What, then, is meant by the hidden job market? A hidden job opportunity is one that is never formally advertised or posted in any public media. These jobs are challenging to find. They nonetheless can represent excellent opportunities for long-term employment.

Various types of opportunities are available through the hidden job market. In addition to full-time employment, there are always lots of part-time and/or temporary appointments and contract work. These can lead to full-time and more secure work in the longer term. Just think about all those jobs that become vacant because of early retirements, deaths, resignations, firings, promotions, transfers, maternity leave, sick leave and other extended leaves. They can all represent a wonderful opportunity for you to get a foot in the door. If an employer knows and is satisfied with your work, s/he is likely to choose you when a permanent opening arises. So, you can see why the "hidden" job market represents such an enormous resource for imaginative, resourceful and persistent job seekers. It can be just that for you!

There are various ways to tap the hidden job market. Again, your local newspaper can provide a good start. They frequently carry information about what is happening in the business world and stories about companies that are expanding or projects that are beginning. Keep a close eye on the business section of the newspaper. It can contain clues that you can turn into job opportunities for yourself.

Networking

Networking is key to tapping the hidden job market successfully. So, what is networking?

Networking simply means telling as many people as you can that you are looking for a job and engaging them in your job search. Tell your family, friends, neighbours, people you knew at school, former co-workers, and professional people like doctors and rehab counsellors, employment professionals and people with whom you do volunteer work. Ask them all to tell others you are looking for work. Engage as wide a circle of people as you possibly can in keeping an ear to the ground for possible job leads you could follow up. Don't be shy about asking. Even if you don't know people very well, most are willing to help if you ask.

Think about this possibility: Suppose you ask twenty-five people to assist you in your job search. Each of them refers you to three others who may be able to help in some way. You will already have a network of one hundred people supporting your job search. This is just the kind of networking you need to do. How you handle networking will be the test of how serious and realistic you are about finding work.

Be sure to include in your network people who are already employed in organizations or types of work in which you are interested. Ask them to look out for changes in their workplace. Who is taking maternity leave? Who is on sick leave? Who is taking educational leave? What new jobs are opening up?

Keep in touch with your network on a regular basis. Employers are like everyone else. When they are hiring they will be influenced by positive recommendations from their own staff members whom they know and trust.

Ask the people in your network to enlist their friends, family and co-workers in alerting you to any possibilities. Research shows that this can yield excellent results. Many people find jobs because of a lead from someone whom they don't even know directly, a friend of a friend!

Why is networking so effective? The answer is that at least five percent of all jobs are vacant at any given time. When some key employees leave a company, it can create a ripple effect resulting in job vacancies in other areas beyond the original job vacated. Whenever you learn about someone who has left a job, you should use it as a cue to apply to the company, or to reapply if you have already applied before.

Accept the fact that networking is an essential part of job-searching. It is something every smart and resourceful job seeker does. Don't be put off by negative attitudes sometimes expressed by unemployed persons. Such attitudes are based on false pride and a distorted notion of independence. Wouldn't you want to assist a friend or acquaintance if he or she were out of work or seeking a better position?

Remember that you've got to be positive and upbeat about yourself, your abilities, and your job search. Enthusiasm is contagious. If you do not present yourself as a winner, network contacts will find it hard to do their best for you.

In developing your network keep some of the following questions in mind:

- Do you know someone who currently does or used to do the type of work in which you are interested?
- Do you know anyone who has had an interview with an employer in whom you are interested?
- Do you have a friend or acquaintance who could put you in touch with an employer in the field in which you are interested?
- Do you know someone who knows about the key people in an organization in which you are interested, or about the scope of operations, organizational commitments and priorities, current projects and track record of the organization in relation to disability?
- Do you know someone who could introduce or refer you to someone who has contact with an employer in whom you are interested?
- Do you belong to any community group, organization or professional association with members who work for an organization in which you are interested or who would make helpful contacts?
- Whom could you introduce yourself to that may have information about employers in your field of interest that you haven't heard about or targeted?
- Can you think of people who could perform library and computer-based research to gather information on desirable employers?
- Do you know people who will call targeted employers for you to obtain the names and job titles of key persons in employing organizations?

Start building your network with the help of a small group of supportive friends and interested people. They can help you expand it to include others who may not be quite so close to you personally, but who have valuable contributions to make.

Yes, penetrating the hidden job market through your network is creative work. It will take all the energy, ingenuity and communication skills you can muster. Don't take it lightly, though, as it is your ticket to success.

Be sure to bring a personal touch to your network building. Telephone or meet personally with people you want to engage. Do it as soon as possible. Supply them with a copy of your resume. Make sure all your network members are clear about your job interests and qualifications. Do not assume that even your very best friends understand these. Go over them in detail. Your network supporters can be more effective if they are well-informed about you. Explain clearly your job search and the type of support you would appreciate.

Be considerate of those who are supporting you. Do not ask network members to do anything that you wouldn't do for them if your positions were reversed. Also, don't ask so much that they will feel imposed upon.

Be sure you keep an up-to-date list of who your network members are and what they have agreed to do for you. Make a note of the best times for contacting them and dates when you want to follow up on their progress and update them on yours.

Don't take your supporters for granted. Let them know their efforts are sincerely appreciated. You can do this in person or by sending a thank-you note. People appreciate having their contributions acknowledged.

Job Fairs

Attending a job fair is another way to penetrate the hidden job market. Job fairs are often held on university, community college and even high school campuses. Employers participate in them to meet students and recruit employees. They can provide general information about career options as well as specific information about current openings. You can attend a job fair to look for a job, gather career information, and/or develop your network of career contacts.

What can you learn from employers at a job fair? You can learn lots of valuable things: Employment and/or hiring trends; skills necessary for different careers/jobs; current/future openings; salary, benefits, training, and other information about the organization; and whom to contact for follow-up discussions.

Make the most of any job fair you attend. Bring along copies of your resume. Be direct. Introduce yourself. If you are job seeking, state the type of position in which you are interested. If you are only gathering information, let employers know that too. Ask for employers' business cards for follow-up discussions or correspondence.

Identifying Potential Employers and Making "Cold" Calls

A key task in job searching is figuring out just who in your area hires people with your job interests and skills. You need to do careful research on local employers.

There are several good reasons for doing research on employers. First, you need to be able to identify who they are and the types and range of skills they are looking for. This fact gathering is an essential first step in a thorough job search.

A second reason is that research on employers and their companies will go a long way towards giving you a competitive edge. Most employers are very favourably impressed by job-seekers who demonstrate they have done their homework; that they know about the company's key people, what it does, the problems it is facing, its important achievements and successes, and changes currently in progress. Put yourself in the shoes of an employer. If you had two applicants equally qualified except that one demonstrates an understanding of what your company is all about and the other does not, which one would you choose?

A third reason for employer research is that it may reveal important information about management practices and future prospects that you'll want to know in deciding whether to accept an offer. For example, if a company has a track record of discrimination or unsound labour relations you may want to think twice about working there. If you are in a position to choose, accepting just any job irrespective of the working conditions is not sound career planning.

It is important to start your job search by making a list of potential employers in your area. You can get this information in several ways. Don't overlook the simplest of these, the Yellow Pages! Use the subject headings in the Yellow Pages to identify relevant employers and record their locations and phone numbers. Make a list of the ones you want to contact.

You can get more detailed information from your local public or university library. It will have business directories along with other related materials. Reference librarians are typically very helpful; just explain that you're in job search and need assistance in identifying and profiling employers in your area of interest.

If you're considering applying to one of the larger employers, you can obtain a list of who they are from the HRDC web site at:

http://www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/lmi/employer/

This will give you relevant information on employers throughout the Province who employ more than fifty persons, or one hundred in the Halifax area. You can select your geographic region and search alphabetically by occupation.

Call a company in which you might be interested and request a copy of their annual report. Reading current and past annual reports can yield valuable information.

Once you get your list of employers and relevant information about them, you're ready to make productive contact with them. Don't think that just because they are not advertising openings there are no jobs available. Remember, we are talking about the hidden job market.

You have to take the initiative. This is often referred to as making "cold" calls. If finding employers was a test of your ingenuity, this will be a test of your mettle. Be clear, however, that it is absolutely necessary.

Are you one of those people who feels shy about picking up the phone and calling a stranger? If so, you are in good company. Lots of people find this difficult. Nonetheless, when someone in your network tells you about an opening, or your research in the library reveals a lead, it is important to do just that. Just sending your resume and covering letter won't do. The job may be gone by then.

You can make cold calling easier by having a prepared script of what you want to say. Another tip is to keep your call short. Just explain directly and to the point about why you are calling. You would like to have an informational interview, submit a resume or make a job application, depending on whether you are responding to a specific job opening or scouting for possible opportunities.

Direct your call to the appropriate manager. Speak with him or her directly and then send your resume. Be sure to get a name, title and address before the call if at all possible. If you have done your research well, you should already have the correct name.

Cold calling pays off richly for lots of job seekers. If you call enough employers and provide them with a resume, you will get interviews. You can increase your chances by following up with a second call after the employer has had a chance to look at your resume. This will focus attention on your qualifications and demonstrate your interest.

Sometimes, when cold calling, you may face rejection. Don't let this dampen your enthusiasm and positive mind set. You need to stay positive so that you don't communicate any negative feelings to the next employer you call. Keep in mind that most prospective employers will want to hear from you, many will invite you to an interview, and one of them will hire you.

Identifying Employment Equity Organizations

These days an increasing number of organizations are specifically recruiting qualified applicants from equity groups, including disability. It is important to know who these are. We are including in the Toolkit Resource Manual the current membership list for the Nova Scotia Employment Equity Practitioners Association. Look it over carefully. Even if these employers don't have job openings in their own organizations, they may be able to direct you to other employment equity organizations who do. They may also know of other organizations or businesses that are not formally members of the Association but have a good track record on equity issues.

Organizations with formally adopted employment equity policies giving preferential hiring to qualified members of equity groups will be known by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. In Nova Scotia it is illegal to discriminate against or in favour of any category of individuals (even groups traditionally facing negative discriminatory hiring practices) without special approval from the Commission. A Commission representative may be able to provide information about which organizations have such policies.

Requesting Informational Interviews

The process of talking to people who have jobs that interest you is called informational interviewing. These interviews are an invaluable source of information about particular kinds of work, organizational directions, workplace conditions and other considerations important in a job search. You will find most people more than willing to share their experience.

Most informational interviews are requested by phone and this is usually preferable. Making a personal phone contact, however, may not always be possible. In these situations requests can be made by letter.

Informational interviews are not job interviews and should not be confused with them. They are essentially, as the name implies, information-gathering, part of your job research. Your network members are good sources of referrals for informational interviews.

When requesting an informational interview, identify yourself and your purpose clearly. Make a commitment to take only twenty or thirty minutes of the person's time. Before actually undertaking the interview, be very clear about what you want to accomplish. Usually the objectives include exploring a specific career path, narrowing your options, obtaining advice on where you might fit into an organization, learning about the important issues and trends in your field of interest, broadening your network of contacts for future reference and devising a strategy for securing desired employment.

We'll go through a few guidelines that we hope will help you with this kind of interview.

- Do prior research just as you would for a job interview. Learn as much as you can about the organization. Write down the questions that you wish to ask. If possible, learn something as well about the person with whom you will be conducting the interview.

- Dress appropriately. Arrive ten or fifteen minutes early, never late. Bring a copy of your resume but distribute it only if requested or with permission.

- During the interview explain once again your purpose in being there. Be prepared to initiate the conversation. Keep to the original time request of twenty to thirty minutes. Ask for referrals to other appropriate individuals in the field or in

related organizations. Remember that this is an information-gathering and advice-seeking interview, not an employment interview. Let the person you are interviewing raise the issue of specific job vacancies.

- After the interview send a thank-you note and tell the person you will keep him or her posted on your progress. This will keep the door open for future contacts.

- Informational interviews are a wonderful way to practice for the actual job interviews that will follow. Evaluate how you did. What could you have done better? Use what you have learned when you conduct your next interview.

- Review the information you received. Did it suggest further or possibly different questions you should ask next time? Write them down.

Here are a few sample questions you might want to ask in an informational interview:

- What do you think are the most important goals and priorities of this organization?

- Is the company growing or down-sizing?

- What are the typical job responsibilities of people doing my type of work?

- What skills are typically required for the type of work in which I am interested?

- What educational preparation or training would prepare me best for my preferred type of work?

- What is the salary range for the kind of job in which I am interested?

- What is your specific job in the organization?

- What has been your personal experience working here?

- What do you really enjoy most about this type of work?

- Are there aspects of the job you don't like and would change if you could?

- What are the prospects for advancement for people starting in entry level positions?

- Are there possibilities for alternative or flexible work arrangements such as adjusted hours, working part-time or job sharing?

- What is the likelihood of job opportunities opening up in the next little while?

- Would it be useful for me to leave a copy of my resume to be kept on file; and what is the name and position title and mailing or e-mail address of the person to whom I should direct my resume and covering letter?

- Do you know of other organizations with similar types of job opportunities, and could you refer me to appropriate contact persons within these organizations?

Informational interviewing is one of the most effective tools available to you as a serious job seeker. Like all other stages of job finding, it requires planning and focus on your part. You will get out of it only what you put into it.

Searching the Internet

If you have a computer and Internet service provider you can use the net to aid in your job search. The Internet is an invaluable tool for individuals looking for work. With access to the Internet you can contact literally hundreds of potential employers directly through their corporate web sites as well as through job listings and employment databases. The HRDC Nova Scotia web site provides a great deal of information about jobs available in Nova Scotia. It also includes a job bank where you can post your resume, and has links to useful labour market information and wage rates by job sector. The web address is:

http://jb-ge.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work also provides information on job availability and allows you to browse its database of listed jobs as well as to submit a resume on-line. Its web address is:

http://www.waen.org/eng.html

People with disabilities are finding the Internet a valuable employment resource. As stated in Abilities Magazine, "The playing field has begun to be leveled. The Internet is a new avenue for job-hunting, and often the technologically savvy worker with a disability has an advantage. Perhaps this is because we have had to rely on computer technology to overcome barriers to communication and mobility".

Although not all people with disabilities are comfortable with computers, growing proportions are. For this group the Internet represents a significant new way to overcome communication and mobility barriers. The rapid growth of the Internet has heightened awareness of the broad range of access issues beyond mobility and prompted concerted effort world wide to assure equal access to its vast information resources. Rapid advances in computer

technology have resulted in software and hardware targeted to virtually every type of specific disability-related communication need. With increased access come ever-increasing opportunities for a truly level playing field in terms of job hunting.

If you are not yet among those in possession of a computer and Internet service provider, you can still get access through your local library and Community Access Points throughout the Province. A list of these Community Access Points is available at:

http://cap.ic.gc.ca/english/4000ns.htm

Visit one of them and take advantage of what the Internet has to offer.

Submitting and Following-up on Job Applications and Resumes

The whole purpose of reviewing formal job listings, developing a network and tapping the hidden job market is, of course, to submit relevant job applications and distribute your resume as widely as possible. Each time you turn up a possible job lead, act quickly to present your resume and make a job application. The importance of acting quickly and systematically on all possible job leads cannot be over-stressed.

It is just as important to act decisively on hidden as on formally listed potential job opportunities. Remember, other job seekers are out there tapping the hidden job market too.

Don't limit your resume distribution to just organizations where there are current job openings. Most organizations will keep resumes on file and contact promising applicants when openings arise. It is in your interests to distribute your resume as widely as possible.

Keep a careful list of every lead you have turned up, along with the name of the appropriate company official. Keep a log of each lead you have followed, as well as all resumes and job applications you have submitted. Note the date of submission and the date(s) when you plan to do a follow up. Don't limit your applications to just a few possibilities. The more resumes you distribute and applications you submit, the more likely you are to get a job interview.

When you submit resumes don't forget to include a cover letter. Be sure as well that you submit an application in the format required by the particular employer. With formally listed jobs the appropriate application format and process is usually made explicit in the ad or listing itself. If you are submitting resumes targeted to companies that have no present openings, check with the company to see what format they prefer. The more closely you adhere to what particular companies prefer and are used to, the more likely you are to be considered.

Remember to follow up each application you submit. It is important to keep your application on the front burner and to demonstrate your enthusiasm and genuine interest.

Distribution of resumes and submission of specific job applications will be an ongoing process. Even if you secure interviews, keep following leads and making applications until you have actually landed a job you want.

Of course, you need to be thinking of how to conduct job interviews before you actually get them. This will be our focus in the next step.

Step 6:
Making Your Interview a Winner

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Step 6:
Making your Interview a Winner

The prospect of job interviews is sometimes a scary business! Remember, if you are being invited to interviews you have every reason to be proud of what you have already accomplished. Besides discovering and building confidence in your own skills, you have located potential employers and communicated your abilities to them in a resume that caught their interest. A job interview is just the next step, though a very important step, towards the ultimate prize, the job you want. Give yourself appropriate credit and get ready to crown your achievements by making your interview a winner.

In this step we'll describe the overall interview process and highlight stages from getting prepared through the actual interview and follow-up. We'll focus as well on some questions that may be asked about both your abilities and your disabilities. For many people just knowing generally what to expect in an interview is half the battle!

The Interview Process

A job interview is a two-way process. An employer uses it to evaluate your fit with the job requirements and his or her own expectations. You use it to evaluate the fit with your interests and goals. Sometimes you will be invited to more than one interview for the same job. If so, the first will essentially be a screening interview; further interviews will mean that you have been "screened in" and are now on a short list of qualified people. The interview will vary somewhat depending on whether the purpose is initial screening or final selection.

There is no one-way of interviewing, so you will need to develop your own style. In the short amount of time that you spend with a potential employer, you will either be screened in or screened out. Your goal is to persuade the employer that you have the skills, background, and ability to do the job and that you can comfortably fit into his/her organization. If you're keen on the job, you will clearly want to be one of those "screened in." Your goal is to project yourself in the most favourable manner possible and thereby set yourself aside from the competition.

Whether they are for screening or hiring purposes, interviews generally follow a common pattern. They begin with a "warm-up," followed by an "information exchange," and end with a "wrap-up".

During the "warm-up", particularly in a first interview, an employer will be sizing you up and forming a first and perhaps lasting impression. How you present yourself in this first encounter will shape that impression.

To help you feel at ease, many practised interviewers will ask general "common-ground" questions that might include shared interests, mutual acquaintances or even your travel to the interview. Though these questions are essentially "small talk" they provide an important opportunity to establish a positive rapport.

Some employers may begin with a very general question such as "Tell me about yourself." Don't be taken off guard. Use this opening to briefly give an immediate positive spin to a summary of your background, skills and interest in the position.

The main part of the interview will consist of an information exchange between the employer and yourself. You will be asked questions about yourself, your qualifications and your suitability for the job. We'll go over some possible questions later. You will, in turn, have an opportunity to explore job requirements in detail.

The emphasis in screening interviews will be somewhat different from that in hiring interviews. When screening, employers may spend more time describing their opportunities than asking you specific questions. The reverse will be true in subsequent interviews when the employer's goal is to evaluate in detail your fit with job requirements. Hiring interviews are focused on you, your qualifications and your suitability relative to other applicants competing for the same job.

After exploring your qualifications the employer will probably say, "Do you have any questions?" This is the cue that the interview is moving to the "wrap-up" stage. Always ask questions. This demonstrates your prior research and interest in the job. Your questions might be simple logistical questions such as, "When can I expect to hear from you?" On the other hand, you might want to ask questions clarifying issues raised earlier or exploring new trends or future prospects for yourself and the organization. Whether the employer specifically asks if you have questions or simply invites you to add anything further, it's best to have a response. You can partially prepare this in advance of the interview, or use this chance to voice further information about yourself.

Now is the time to thank the employer for the interview and reiterate your interest in the job. Remember, the final impression is almost as important as the first impression. Leave the employer wanting to hire you or at least learn more about you!

Getting Prepared

Work you did in Step 5 while conducting your job search will serve you well now as you are being called for interviews. Employers will notice and be influenced by how well prepared you are. If you have taken the trouble to do your homework before an interview you will come

across as genuinely interested, committed and attentive to detail, highly desirable qualities in an employee.

Review the research you did on employers. Before you go for any interview be sure you are aware of the goals, mission and concerns of the organization. Be clear in your own mind how you can offer value to the organization in light of these. Ask in advance for a job description so that you can speak knowledgeably about how your skills match those required. Review the key elements of the job description and job advertisement so you can be ready to promote your strengths effectively.

You can influence the interview outcome better if you realize that an interview is partly a subjective process. Yes, an employer is looking for a qualified person. At the same time, if two candidates are equally qualified, the job will go to the person who presents with the greatest personal appeal. Personality, confidence, enthusiasm, a positive outlook and good interpersonal and communication skills count heavily towards making an interview successful.

Personal presentation skills can be learned and improved with practice. Do this over and over with your friends. Carry out practice interviews and get lots of feedback on how you are coming across. Learn how to selectively present your background and give thoughtful answers to interview questions. Practice presenting yourself in a way that demonstrates your interest in, and understanding of, the organization, and an effective strategy for marketing yourself. There is no magic to interviewing. It is merely a matter of practice and hard work.

Clarify in advance the name and business address of the person who will be interviewing you. If possible, try to get a sense of what the person is likely to expect, and any other information that would be helpful. If you know people who already work in the organization, contact them for advice about what might be the best approach to this person. The more you know about the person the better prepared you can be.

Put together an information package or portfolio to take to the interview. It should include extra copies of your resume in case they are needed, a personal data sheet summarizing your qualifications and fit for this particular job, your list of references, your personal calling card and a pen and notebook in which you can make notes. If you already have letters of recommendation, include them as well.

Review your resume and personal data sheet carefully just prior to the interview. Make a note of your skills most relevant to the job description. You want to be sure and confident about why you are the best person for this particular job. Rehearse presenting your relevant skills in a positive and convincing light. Get together with some tough-minded people who will give you honest feedback. Describe your skills to them and ask for their critical evaluation of your presentation style.

Prepare a list of possible questions you will want to ask. If other questions come to your mind during the interview you don't need to stick to these. It is helpful, however, to have some general questions ready in case you are invited to raise questions.

Alert your references to the fact that you have an interview. Give them a copy of your resume if you have not already done so. Review the main points with them so they are well prepared for any calls they may receive. Review with them as well your reasons why you believe you are a good match for the job requirements.

Creating a Favourable Impression

We have already noted the importance of creating a positive impression. For people with disabilities this can sometimes pose challenges. Cultural expectations typically reflect able-bodied reality. As we proceed through the guidelines you will notice expectations that don't fit you. That's all right. There are alternate ways of doing things. Our intent is to simply sensitise you to a number of expectations that the average employer may have. You will probably want to address these in some way. Humour and comfort with your own disability is the very best medicine possible!

Here are a few guidelines that may help:

- Be sure to dress appropriately. A neat and well-groomed appearance is essential.
- Arrive on time for the interview. Plan your schedule so that you get there ten to fifteen minutes prior to the appointment time. If you are not sure of how to get there, consider going to the interview premises a day or so ahead. This way you will know exactly how to avoid any unexpected delays or transportation problems. If, despite your best efforts, you are detained be sure to telephone. Don't forget that employers are busy people. They don't have time to stand by waiting for someone who will not show up.
- If there is a receptionist identify yourself and give the name of your interviewer and the time of the interview. If there is no front desk, find someone whom you can advise of your arrival.
- Greet your interviewer by name. Here is one of those situations that may not fit. Employers tend to expect the greeting to be accompanied by a firm handshake. Do it if you are physically able. If not, make some alternative gesture that is equally expressive of your interest and confidence. Be positive and spirited in your greeting.
- Communicate clearly and enthusiastically about your experiences and skills. Be professional but let your personality shine through. Just be yourself.

- If you have not received or understood a clear job description, your interview is the appropriate time to request clarification.

- In describing your experience or answering questions, don't use weak and mealy-mouthed expressions such as "maybe" or "kind of", and don't let your voice go up at the end of a sentence. These styles of communication make you sound uncertain and indecisive. Lukewarm words make you sound lukewarm!

- If you are asked about some previous bad experience or some weakness in your background, such as low grades in a course you took, a gap in your resume or a sudden job loss, take care not to be defensive. Employers simply don't want to hear a lot of excuses or bad feelings. Instead, be direct and honest, focusing only on the facts and what you learned from the experience. Don't ever criticize a former employer or blame others for your shortcomings.

- Listen carefully to what the employer tells you about the job and asks about you. Being focused and engaged in the interview is critical.

- Pay attention to your non-verbal behaviour. It speaks volumes about you. Be sure your body language is delivering the same positive message as your spoken word. Control any nervous habits that may communicate lack of confidence or distractibility. Negative body language and mixed messages can be the kiss of death in an interview. If you are inclined to use negative body language, practise and practise until you overcome it. If you have a physical disability that you think might be misinterpreted, be sure to address this early in the interview.

- Don't be afraid of a short pause when you are formulating an answer to a question. A thoughtful response is much more important than a speedy one. In fact, the employer may also need time to formulate a question. There is no need to fill every moment with conversation.

- Remember that employers have pressing needs that only employees with particular skills can meet. Describe your skills in a way that responds to these pressing needs. If you are prepared to give examples of past achievements that relate directly to the employer's needs you'll surely score lots of points.

- Employers often expect eye contact. They think it suggests honesty and sincerity. This too can be a cultural expectation that doesn't fit some people. Maintain eye contact if you can. If not, use alternate means to communicate these valued attributes.

Responding Effectively to Questions

You will be most effective if you are prepared for questions you are likely to be asked. Again we reiterate the importance of having done your homework about the organization, what skills they need and how you could fit into the picture. Write out likely questions and your responses

ahead of time. This will reduce the stress you're under when you are face to face with the employer.

Here are a few questions you may want to be prepared for. Practise answering them before the interview:

- *"Tell me about yourself".*

Give the brief summary you have prepared about your education, relevant training and experience. Give a few of your important work-related accomplishments, how you achieved them and how they relate to the job. Write these out ahead of time also so that you feel confident about your response.

- *"What do you think you can offer to this job?"*

Here you can respond by elaborating on your experience and your particular skills and talents as they relate to the job description. Again, examples of achievements are important.

- *"Why do you want to work here?"*

Describe the things about the job and the company that interest you. Your prior research will come in handy in responding to this question.

- *"What subjects did you enjoy at school?"*

For questions of this type be sure to frame your answers in terms directly related to the job requirements. Relate your enduring interests in these subjects to future responsibilities on the job. It is generally assumed that a person who really enjoys something is more likely to do well at it.

- *What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?"*

Stay positive in your response. Focus on your strengths. If you have limitations relevant to job requirements, admit to them but emphasize what you have been doing to overcome them.

- *"How would people who know you well describe you?"*

Here is your chance to describe those valuable personal traits and transferrable skills you defined in Step 2. Review them and practice speaking positively and convincingly about them. Confidence in yourself will inspire an employer's confidence in you.

- *"Why did you leave your last job?"*

Be direct and honest but always positive. Don't complain about your last employer. Instead, present your reasons in terms of new opportunities or challenges you were seeking. For example, "I wanted to expand my skills and learn new ones" or "I was looking for an opportunity for advancement." If you were laid off because of down-sizing just say so. Lots of people are in the same boat.

- *"What sort of job opportunity are you looking for?"*

Try to be specific about what you really want in terms of the work itself and the working conditions. Ask questions if necessary to discover what is possible. Save questions about salary, benefits and opportunities for promotion until you are actually made an offer.

- *"Where do you want to be in five or ten years?"*

This type of question is usually intended to discover how clearly you have thought through your career goals. The work you did in Step 2, defining your short and long-term employment goals, will be good preparation for this question. Review both your goals and action plans and make a few brief notes in case this question is asked. You want to communicate realistic goals as well as direction and purpose in your response.

Be sure to thank the employer before leaving. Also, pay careful attention to any clues the employer gives you about where your strengths lie and where you might have fallen short. This will help for next time.

If, despite your best efforts, you should feel at the end of the interview that all has not gone well, don't be discouraged or hard on yourself. This happens to everyone at one time or another. Remember, it takes time and practice to do a good interview. Just try to evaluate where you went wrong and how you could do better next time. Learning from your mistakes is what practice is all about.

Discussing Your Disability and Accommodation Needs

Some employers have had little experience with disability. They may feel uncertain about what to expect. They may also be reluctant, however, to ask questions directly for fear of offending. It is always in your interests to get such questions on the table so you can correct any misconceptions. Your challenge is to tune in accurately to employer concerns and respond

directly and confidently to them. Honesty, straightforwardness and confidence are the best approach and are contagious. The more comfortable and confident you are with your own disability the more accepting an employer is likely to be.

Here are a few questions that may be in the minds of employers even if they don't voice them:

- *"What will this person's disability mean in terms of carrying out job responsibilities?"*

If you have significant disability-related limitations you should be up front about them. At the same time you need to present options for managing these and point out past achievements in overcoming barriers. Review the work you did in Step 1. You listed barriers you have faced and creative solutions to them. Employers are impressed with problem-solving capabilities. Overcoming disability-related barriers is good evidence of problem solving skills.

- *"What accommodations will be required?"*

If you require workplace accommodations be clear and direct about these as well. Present accommodation options that will work for you. If employers have not experienced a disability directly they may not be familiar with the incredible range of accommodation options that now exists. They may also tend to exaggerate in their own minds the difficulty of accommodating your particular kind of disability. Your challenge is to educate and convince.

- *"How much will accommodations cost?"*

Some employers may be nervous about the potential costs of accommodation. The truth is, however, that most accommodations are either very inexpensive or cost nothing at all. They may involve only commonplace devices that compensate for lost or impaired functions, and minor adjustments of job responsibilities and/or hours of work.

If the accommodations you require are of the more expensive type, such as computer hardware and screen reading software, find out in advance if there are options for reducing the cost to employers. Larger employers would probably not find such costs a burden but small operations may. It is actually the smaller businesses where most job opportunities now reside.

In Nova Scotia there are some options for access to needed technical aids if an employer cannot provide them. The Opportunities Fund is one such source, as are Workers' Compensation if you qualify, the Department of Community Services if you are

receiving benefits, or Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities if you are training preparatory to a job.

If an extended on-the-job learning period is the required accommodation, the employer may benefit from a targeted wage subsidy. Whatever the accommodation required, be sure you are up to speed on the possible options and present these positively to the employer. If you don't know the options for your particular disability, contact an employment specialist who is familiar with your type of disability and can advise you.

- *"Are there advantages or just disadvantages in hiring people with disabilities?"*

Sometimes employers will be more aware of what they see as disadvantages and not realize the advantages. It will fall on you to educate these employers. Make sure you are educated yourself and able to be articulate about the positive value people with disabilities can bring to a workplace. Bone up on statistics that dispel myths and favour the hiring of disabled persons. Be familiar with financial, community and public relations incentives. Be prepared to speak about the proven track record of extraordinary commitment and loyalty demonstrated by employed persons with disabilities.

- *"Will this person miss a lot of time because of his or her disability, or be a safety hazard in the workplace?"*

Be ready to discuss your own history of attendance at school or work, including volunteer work, as well as research findings on absenteeism. Research has shown that on average people with disabilities miss less time from work than non-disabled people and that their safety record is equally compelling.

- *"What if I hire this disabled person and find that his or her disability imposes limitations on work performance? Will I be able to raise such issues without being viewed as discriminatory?"*

Be ready to respond in two ways. First, express confidence in your ability to work around most limitations with creative coping strategies. After all, you have had lots of practice at this and can give examples to support your confidence. Secondly, offer assurances that you would welcome honest feedback on your work performance and that you are prepared to respond positively to constructive criticism. Sincerely offered

assurances on your part can go a long way towards alleviating an employer's unrealistic concerns.

- *"Will my insurance costs go up if I hire a person with a disability?"*

Employers sometimes worry needlessly about this. It is obviously necessary to observe appropriate safety guidelines. This is in both the employer's interests and your own. Having done so, however, there is no reason whatsoever for an employer to fear increased insurance costs.

- *"What will be the effect on other staff of hiring a person with a disability?"*

Be prepared to speak to your ability to get along with other people, disabled and non-disabled alike. Point to instances where you have been able to put non-disabled people at ease. Point as well to positive experiences working closely with people and educating them regarding your disability. Explain ways in which you have interpreted the nature and meaning of your disability to others in simple direct language that has freed others of misunderstandings.

- *"Will this person be able to get to work on time?"*

Be ready to explain how you have worked out a reliable transportation system in the past and will do so again should you be made a job offer. If some flexibility in working arrangements is required to accommodate transportation needs, present clear options for these that will not compromise your putting in the hours for which you are paid.

You may feel that employers bear responsibility for educating themselves on issues of disability. There is merit in this. In the real world of today, however, employers will reflect the gamut of attitudes held by the general public. There will always be some who need to be educated. A positive approach on your part can often accomplish this.

Following Up On Your Interviews

After the interview, take time to write down the names and titles of all your interviewers, your impressions, remaining questions and information learned. If you are interviewing regularly, this will help you keep employers and circumstances clearly defined.

Follow up the interview with a thank-you letter. Employers regard this as evidence of your attention to detail, as well as an indication of your interest in the position.

Evaluate your own effectiveness in the interview situation. Analyze where your interview skills were strong and where you need to improve. Write down your needed improvements as goals and develop an action plan for how you will pursue them. Take these needed improvements seriously. Get help in pursuing your action plan if you need it.

If you do not get a job for which you are interviewed, contact the employer and ask for feedback on where you fell short. Tell him or her you are interested in improving your future chances. Most will be glad to give you constructive feedback. Incorporate helpful suggestions into your new goals and action plan and act on this plan as soon as possible.

Keep up the good work of pursuing further applications and future interviews. The more interviews you have the better. One of them will land you a job!

Accepting a Job Offer

Have you had some job interviews that seemed quite promising? Yes, that anxiously awaited call has just come. You have been offered a job. Wow! What do you do now?

Stay calm and be professional. Before actually accepting, make sure you understand clearly what the job description entails. If you have any lingering uncertainties, now is the time to raise them.

Work out with the employer a mutual understanding regarding hours of work, wages, working conditions, overtime compensation and benefits. All these matters should be mutually agreed before you formally accept the offer.

This is also the time to clarify accommodation needs if you have not already done so. Be honest about your needs and clear about your rights. Be flexible, however, and work with the employer in finding creative solutions to accommodation needs. Co-operation now can prevent confrontation later. Don't set yourself up for failure by not defining and securing agreement around a genuine accommodation need.

Finally, confirm your acceptance of a job offer in writing. Be gracious in thanking the employer for her or his positive consideration of your application. Reiterate your interest in the job and your commitment to making a positive contribution. Always include your understanding of what you and the employer have agreed upon, including any accommodations. This can prevent misunderstanding later.

When you've sent off your letter of acceptance, say "Hooray!" and give yourself a very special treat. You deserve it!

Step 7:
Reaching For a Successful Future

Step 7:
Reaching for a Successful Future

Securing employment is a giant step. Indeed, it is the realization of an important goal, an achievement of which you can be justly proud. It is not, however, your final destination. Rather, it is an important landmark along your journey towards a brighter and more fulfilling future.

Enjoy the well-earned victory your new job represents. It will help you recharge your batteries. Once you have done so, it is time to turn your energy, commitment and experience to the challenges that lie ahead. You know now that you can stay on top of any such challenges. You've already demonstrated that by getting this far!

Learning the New Job

First on the list of new challenges is learning the job you've just taken on. Whether you are a new or seasoned worker, every new job means lots to learn and lots to accomplish. Successfully meeting these challenges is crucial.

Yes, beginning a new job can sometimes feel a bit scary, especially if this is your first job or, at least, your first in a while. Think, though, of how exciting and challenging it can be. Remember, you are in the driver's seat. You can shape your immediate job experience as well as your longer-term future. Just apply that energy and enthusiasm you've already demonstrated to becoming a valued and productive employee.

During the first few months your employer will be assessing your value to the organization. Paying attention to the following key areas will allow you to demonstrate your worth:

- Define your immediate workplace learning goals. What do you need to know or find out about in order to become that valued employee you really want to be? Write down your job duties and the skills you require to discharge them. Then write down your learning goals and actions you will need to take to reach them. Act on your plan. There, you see! It's all just a continuing process of goal defining and refining, and doing whatever it takes to reach your goals. You're used to this by now.

- Make orienting yourself to the new workplace a priority. Learn about your employer's objectives and organizational commitments. Focus on what you can contribute before you focus on opportunities for personal development.

- Demonstrate an understanding of and loyalty to organizational goals. Employers appreciate and are prepared to reward employee behaviours that reflect organizational commitment. Such commitment can also dramatically enhance your own job satisfaction.

- Pay attention to the culture of the organization and workplace etiquette. What are the spoken and unspoken rules on such things as dress code, use of the telephone and reporting when you are ill?

- Be very conscious of the image you portray. Enthusiasm, openness to learning, dedication to the job and demonstrated willingness to do more than your share will go a long way towards shaping positive employer and co-worker perceptions of you.

- When you are not sure of how to do something ask for help from your supervisor and co-workers. Don't compound unsatisfactory performance by a defensive refusal to admit you're stumped. Everyone needs help from time to time. You are no exception!

- Seek out constructive feedback from your manager or supervisor. Ask about both your strengths and your weaknesses. Be prepared to respond positively to feedback. This will demonstrate your eagerness to learn and improve your performance.

- Most important of all, apply yourself to every aspect of your job. Don't overlook any details. Don't allow yourself to slack off on even those tasks you'd rather not do. All new employees must pay their dues. You must adapt to the routine tasks with the same enthusiasm you have for the more interesting ones. Your job performance and your worth will be judged on the full range of your work responsibilities.

Improving Existing Skills, Learning New Ones

You got this job because you were able to sell your employer on your personal assets and skills. Workplace and job requirements, however, don't remain static. Today's workplace is different from ten years ago, and will be different again five or ten years from now. Staying abreast of and mastering changing skill requirements is a process of life-long learning. You are responsible for just that. If you do not take this responsibility seriously, you risk being left behind.

How might you go about maximizing your individual work skills to meet current and future workplace needs? Give some thought to the following:

- Take appropriate responsibility for your own career. You can find help and support from others, but in the end it's your call.

- Recognize that the only real certainty in today's and tomorrow's work world is change. Work requirements will evolve and new ones emerge. Some tasks and

even jobs will disappear altogether and almost all jobs will incorporate new skill demands.

- In the face of change you will have to make some important choices. If you want to keep or advance in your job, you will need to engage in an ongoing review of your skills, the same type of exercise you did in Step 2. As you recognize skills that need improvement or new ones you must learn, make a plan. Review possible educational and training options you might pursue. Perhaps this will involve going back to school full or part-time to upgrade your credentials. Perhaps it will be as simple as taking some courses or arranging practice opportunities. Whatever is required, don't neglect it. Filling skill gaps, improving existing skills and acquiring new ones is critical to successful job performance and ultimately a successful career.

- If you do conclude that your value to the organization would be enhanced by further education or training, don't forget to check with your employer or union about possible financial assistance. Some companies have training funds earmarked for helping valued employees upgrade skills as job requirements change. If such funds are not available explore the potential sources identified in Step 3.

Engaging With Co-workers

Co-workers, like society itself, will reflect varying levels of familiarity and comfort with disability. Some fellow workers may have had considerable experience with family members or friends who have disabilities, and communicate acceptance, sensitivity and awareness. Others without any such direct contact and familiarity may communicate a feeling of intimidation and awkwardness. In the latter case it might be tempting to avoid engaging with such peers. Avoiding interaction with your peers in the workplace, however, seldom works to your advantage in the long-term. Rather, taking the initiative in interpreting your disability comfortably and openly is usually more effective and personally satisfying.

Friendly and supportive peer relationships are too precious to be taken lightly. You need to cultivate them. Don't allow yourself to become isolated, even in a workplace that at first seems less than hospitable and welcoming.

There are several things you can do to foster good peer relationships:

- Demonstrate your own comfort level, confidence and capacity to cope with limitations imposed by your disability.

- Don't use your disability to avoid carrying your fair share of the load. If your disability imposes genuine limitations that necessitate other workers picking up

some responsibilities they otherwise wouldn't have, offer to exchange rather than simply off-load duties. A fair exchange is no robbery!

- Volunteer to help your peers whenever you are in a position to do so. Generosity in your approach to others is likely to encourage a reciprocal response.

- Become active in your union if there is one. Volunteer to be on committees or take on special projects as the opportunity arises.

- Learn to listen sensitively to those around you. Take the time to understand their concerns, anxieties and criticisms. Tune in accurately and respond empathetically to their needs and priorities.

- Participate in social activities with your co-workers. Get to know your co-workers as people, not just as co-workers.

- Avoid internal office politics at all costs. They are divisive and you can only be the loser.

- Maintain a sense of humour. It can work wonders. At the very least, it will keep you from taking yourself too seriously!

Maintaining Your Support Network

Besides cultivating supportive relationships within your workplace, you need to maintain your external support network. You invested a lot of time and effort in developing it during your job search. Stay connected so that you can call on network members if workplace problems or crises occur. Your network can also be invaluable as you reassess the employment choices you have made and contemplate new ones.

For most people with disabilities it is critical to have a supportive network available. You need people around you who understand your disability and can help you sort out:

- How to deal effectively with emergent workplace issues, problems and crises that could otherwise feel overwhelming;

- How to devise creative solutions to workplace or external barriers that pose threats to work performance or advancement of career goals;

- How to deal effectively with behaviours and attitudes in others that, conscious or unconscious, are discriminatory in their impact;

- How to simply maintain perspective and stay on course when the going gets rough!

- How to explore and pursue options for promotion in your workplace;
- How to analyze and refine your employment goals and options as conditions and your own interests change.

There are so many reasons for maintaining your network that we can only suggest a few illustrative ones here. Remember, we humans derive our strength and purpose from positive and mutually supportive relationships with others. Don't cut your ties with people who have been helpful in the past, the professionals, friends, family members, former teachers, all those who have played a significant role in your life, school and work. Make a point of just picking up the phone and calling them from time to time. They could be your salvation in a pinch!

Re-examining and Re-defining Your Goals and Plans

After you've been in a job for a while, it's time to take stock of the choices you have made. Have your career choices yielded the outcomes you expected and wanted? Are you feeling restless and in need of new or different challenges? Are your goals still visionary enough to keep you motivated and moving ahead? Well, it's time to stop and reflect on where you are now and where you want to go. You need to re-examine and perhaps redefine your long and short-term goals and readjust your employment strategy.

Your future is much too precious to just let it happen without your taking charge. Goal refinement and strategy adjustment are ongoing processes. Make sure you pause at regular intervals to ask yourself a few simple questions:

- *How far have I come towards meeting the goals I set for myself?*
- *What have been my best successes and my stumbling blocks along the way?*
- *Where do I want my career to go in the next few months, the next year, the next five years?*
- *What new or different career goals do my future aspirations bring into focus for me?*
- *Exactly what must I do to realize my immediate, medium and longer term goals?*
- *How willing and able am I to invest what will be required to really get where I want to go?*
- *What do I need to do for myself to nurture my own sense of self worth, accomplishment and well-being?*

Think about these questions carefully and often. Write out your answers and set time frames for yourself. Don't ignore the question about nurturing yourself. It's just as important as the other questions.

Thinking about these questions could lead you in any one of several directions. Perhaps you will become more focused in pursuing promotion. Perhaps you will define educational or training goals. Or maybe you will want to branch out into a completely different type of job.

The point is that most of us alter our career paths several times during our working lives in response to shifting labour market conditions, new interests or expanding opportunities. So, as you gain experience and develop new interests, you will need to reassess your career goals and choices and revise your action plan accordingly.

Whatever your chosen path, be sure it is a planned and purposeful one. Your future is your most precious gift, much too precious to be allowed to just happen. Take charge of it in a planned and thoughtful way.

If we could offer some concluding advice, it would be the hope that as you move forward in your career, you stay visionary in your outlook, dogged in your determination, practical in your approach and successful in your outcome.

We hope this Toolkit has contributed in some way to that successful outcome!

Book II

Appendices

Appendix II-A

Information From the Department of Community Services Regarding Family Benefits

The following material was provided by the Department of Community Services. We remind the reader that this information may change with the introduction of the new legislation in the Fall of 2000.

Family Benefits Policy Changes

- **Reason for Change: Implementation of standardized rates across the province.**
- **It is important to remember the policy changes noted do not apply to recipients granted assistance prior to May 1, 2000.**

Policy	Change
Training/Educational Programs (05-02-13)	• Recipients are expected to access all available sources of income/support. For individuals who meet the outlined criteria, assistance may be provided while attending post secondary training, not to exceed two years.
Assets	• All liquid assets will be considered in determining eligibility. The total value of liquid assets will be divided by the maximum monthly assistance entitlement to determine the length of ineligibility. • No provision for exceptions
Determining Net Wages (05-06-25)	• Wages and salaries are charged against entitlement net of mandatory deductions.
Incentives: Wages (05-06-15)	• Incentives include a monthly wage income exemption. • The first $50 of net monthly earned income or of income of a training allowance for recipients with no dependents is exempt. The first $100 of net monthly earned income or of income of a training allowance for recipients with dependents is exempt.
Incentives: Vocational Training Allowance	• New applicants on or after May 1, 2000 will no longer be eligible to receive a vocational training allowance (VTA) (maximum $200) through the Family Benefits program. Eligible individuals may receive educational/training supports through the Social Assistance, Special Needs policy, Employment Related Expenses (2-7-1) • For recipients granted Family Benefits prior to May 1, 2000, VTA may be provided. • Should existing Family Benefits clients wish to receive educational/training supports, up to a maximum of $400 through the Social Assistance program, they have the option to be moved to the new rates.
Incentives: Persons in receipt of an income from a Training Allowance	• For persons participating in an approved educational program, the first $275 of the monthly training allowance shall not be exempt. The wage incentive of $50 (no dependents) and $100 (with dependents) applies.
Incentives: Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) (05-06-15) Sheltered Employment Participants (05-06-15)	• For Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities program clients the first $275 of the monthly vocational allowance is not considered chargeable income and is exempt. The balance is to be charged at 100%. • The stipend paid to sheltered employment participants to a maximum of $100 per month is exempt.

Incentives:	First Month's Wage and Training Allowance Exemption	• No longer applicable - deleted from policy

- **The following policies are effective for all current and new recipients.**

Policy	Change
School Supplies Supplement (05-02-14)	• This is a new benefit available to families with school age dependents. • Families with children will receive a one-time payment of $100 for each child ages 13 to 18, and $50 for each child ages 5 to 12. • This assistance will be included in September's monthly entitlement.
Co-pay (05-09-01)	• On June 1, 2000, the co-pay for Pharmacare increases from $3.00 to $5.00 for each prescription. For those who do not currently have a co-pay, that will remain unchanged. • **Co-pay amount is effective June 1, 2000 for all current and new recipients.**

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Social Assistance Policy Changes

- **Reason for Change: Implementation of standardized rates across the province.**
- **It is important to remember the policy changes noted do not apply to recipients granted assistance prior to May 1, 2000.**

Policy	Change
Training/Educational Programs (1-4-9)	• Recipients are expected to access all available sources of income/support. For individuals who meet the outlined criteria, assistance may be provided while attending post secondary training, not to exceed two years.
Assets (1-5-1)	• All liquid assets will be considered in determining eligibility. The total value of liquid assets will be divided by the maximum monthly assistance entitlement to determine the length of ineligibility. • No provision for exceptions
Incentives: Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) (1-6-4) Sheltered Employment Participants (1-6-4)	• For Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities program clients the first $275 of the monthly vocational allowance is not considered chargeable income and is exempt. The balance is to be charged at 100%. • The stipend paid to sheltered employment participants to a maximum of $100 per month is exempt.

- **The following policies are effective for all current and new recipients.**

Policy	Change
School Supplies Supplement (2-11-1)	• This is a new benefit available to families with school age dependents. • Families with children will receive a one-time payment of $100 for each child ages 13 to 18, and $50 for each child ages 5 to 12. • This assistance will be included in September's monthly entitlement.

Co-pay (2-3-1)	• On June 1, 2000, the co-pay for Pharmacare increases from $3.00 to $5.00 for each prescription. For those who do not currently have a co-pay, that will remain unchanged. • **Co-pay amount is effective June 1, 2000 for all current and new recipients.**

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Chapter 1 Basic Needs	Section 8 Rates of Assistance	Subject 1 Schedule A: Personal Allowances Schedule B: Maximum Shelter Allowances
Issued: April 1, 1998		

Applicable for applicants/recipients post April 30, 2000

RATES OF ASSISTANCE

SCHEDULE A: Personal Allowances

AGE GROUP	OWN HOME, RENT, ROOMING OR BOARDING			
	FOOD	CLOTH	MISC	TOTAL
0-6 years	$85	$15*	$12	$112
7-12 years	$112	$15*	$12	$139
13-18 years	$134	$15*	$12	$161
19 yrs & over	$126	$15*	$12	$153

*excluded during first 3 months of assistance

SCHEDULE B: Maximum Shelter Allowances

FAMILY SIZE	OWN HOME/RENT/ROOMING	BOARDING
1 person	$216**	$197
2 persons	$524	$229
3 or more persons	$569	$270
single disabled***	$487	$197

**Up to an additional $175 per month can be provided for:

- Persons with a history of chronic mental and/or physical illness which present a significant barrier to employment.
- Persons age 55+ with significant barriers to employment.
- Single women fleeing an abusive situation including discharge from a Transition House. The additional top up funding may be provided until the issues related to the abusive situation have been addressed, such as a court process and/or counselling related to the abuse. This provision may be extended up to a six month period. Any consideration for continuance beyond this period must be substantiated and supervisory approval obtained.

*** Persons with a disability: Disabled, for the purpose of shelter allowances, means having a major physical or mental impairment or a combination of mental impairment and physical impairment that is likely to continue for not less than twelve months, and which renders the person unemployable in the regular labour market at the time of application.

Note: A single expectant woman, over the age of 19, in her seventh month, may qualify for a shelter allowance of up to $524 per month.

Chapter 1 Basic Needs	Section 8 Rates of Assistance	Subject 1 Schedule A: Personal Allowances Schedule B: Maximum Shelter Allowances
Issued: April 1, 1998		

Applicable for applicants/recipients post April 30, 2000

Appendix II-B Accessible Transportation

Access-A-Bus	490-6681
HOPE (Yarmouth)	742-8910
Le' Transport de Clare (Digby County)	645-3693
Kings County	678-1218
Disabled Consumer Colchester Able Transport	895-2110
Colchester Transportation Co-op Ltd	892-2323
CHAD	755-3231
Antigonish/Guysborough	1-800-435-5438
Handi-Trans (Cape Breton Municipality)	539-8124
Dial-A-Ride	1-877-305-7433
Acadian Lines	454-9321

Appendix II-C Self-descriptive Words for Use in a Resume

accurate	active	adept	alert
ambitious	analytical	animated	articulate
artistic	assertive	capable	careful
cautious	cheerful	committed	competent
confident	conscientious	considerate	consistent
constructive	cooperative	creative	decisive
dependable	determined	diligent	diplomatic
disciplined	discreet	discriminating	dynamic
effective	efficient	eloquent	empathic
energetic	enterprising	enthusiastic	ethical
fair	flexible	generous	genial
hard-working	helpful	honest	imaginative
independent	industrious	intelligent	judicious
logical	loyal	methodical	meticulous
objective	observant	optimistic	orderly
patient	perceptive	persistent	persuasive
pleasant	positive	practical	precise
productive	prudent	punctual	quick
realistic	reliable	resourceful	responsible
responsive	self-reliant	serious	sincere
sociable	supportive	systematic	tactful
well-spoken			

Appendix II-D: Employability Skills

The following is a list of skills that employers look for. Check off the ones that relate to you.

I enjoy working in teams and sharing ideas that I think can help benefit the group

I consider myself to be a hard worker

I am flexible in working at different time schedules

I can work independently and produce results

I enjoy working in a job that challenges me

I am able to confidently make sound decisions

I enjoy the challenge of learning new skills and getting to use them

I am picky about details and I like my work to reflect that

I maintain the utmost professionalism when I am at work

I take pride in completing a project and seeing that it is done well

I have excellent organizational skills

I have excellent communication skills and I am confident enough to communicate with people at various levels of an organization

I am able to analyze information

I proven myself as a hard worker with an attention to detail

I am able to present myself well and be persuasive

I am able to prioritize, delegate and motivate

I am enthusiastic and a quick learner

I am capable of seeing and accepting different points of view

I follow directions well

I work well under pressure

I generally have a positive attitude

I am self-motivated and I can get a job done with little or no supervision

I am able to establish and maintain a good working relationship with both management and other staff

Appendix II-E Action Verbs for Resume Writing

Action Verbs

A
achieved, acted, adapted, administered, advanced, advised, analyzed, anticipated, appraised, approved, arranged, assembled, asserted, assessed, assisted, attended, audited, authorized;

B
balanced, budgeted, built;

C
calculated, checked, classified, cleaned, coached, collected, communicated, compared, compiled, completed, composed, comprehended, computed, conceived, conceptualized, conducted, confronted, consolidated, controlled, constructed, coordinated, corresponded, counselled, crafted, created;

D
decided, defined, demonstrated, designed, determined, developed, devised, diagnosed, directed, discovered, displayed, drafted, drew, drove;

E
edited, educated, enabled, encouraged, entertained, established, estimated, evaluated, expediated, explained;

F
fabricated, facilitated, followed, forecasted, forged, formulated, founded;

G
gathered, generated, graduated, guided;

H
handled, harvested, helped;

I
identified, illustrated, imagined, implemented, improved, improvised, increased, influenced, informed, initiated, inspected, inspired, installed, instructed, interpreted, interviewed, invented, investigated;

J
judged

L
launched, led, lifted, listened, located;

M
maintained, managed, measured, mediated, memorized, moderated, monitored, motivated, moved;

N
navigated, negotiated, nurtured;

O
observed, operated, organized, originated;

P
painted, participated, perceived, performed, persisted, persuaded, planned, prepared, presented, printed, processed, produced, programmed, promoted, proposed, protected, proved, provided, publicized, published, purchased;

Q
questioned, queried

R
raised, read, reasoned, recommended, reconciled, recorded, recruited, reduced, rehabilitated, reinforced, remodelled, reorganized, repaired, reported, represented, researched, resolved, restored, retrieved, reviewed, revised, revitalized;

S
saved, scheduled, shaped, simplified, sketched, sold, spoke, started, steered, streamlined, strengthened, studied, summarized, supervised, supported, surveyed, systematized;

T
taught, trained, translated, travelled, treated;

U
understood, updated, upgraded;

V
visualized, volunteered;

W
worked, wrote

Appendix II-F Locations of Human Resource Centres in Nova Scotia

Antigonish
325 Main Street
Antigonish, NS B2G 2C3
Hours: 8:30pm - 4:30pm

Bedford
2nd Floor, Royal Bank Building
1597 Bedford Highway
Bedford, NS B4A 3Z8
Hours: 8:30am - 4:30pm

Bridgewater
Human Resources Center of Canada
77 Dufferin Street
P.O. Box 3100
Bridgewater, NS B4V 3J1
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

Dartmouth
114 Woodlawn Rd.
P.O. Box 2400
Dartmouth, NS B2W 4A5
Hours: 8:30am - 4:30pm

Glace Bay
70 Main Street, Senator's Place, Suite 201
P.O. Box 310
Glace Bay, NS B1A 4X9
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

Guysborough
Chedabucto Centre
P.O. Box 230
Guysborough, NS B0H 1N0
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm
Fax: (902) 625-4137

Halifax
2nd Floor, Mumford Tower 2
Halifax Shopping Centre,
7001 Mumford Road,
P.O. Box 1800
Halifax, NS B3J 3V1
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

Inverness
Central Avenue (Civic# 15926)
P.O. Box 520
Inverness, NS BOE 1N0
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

Kentville
Human Resources Centre of Canada
495 Main Street Suite 1
Kentville, NS B4N 3W5
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

New Glasgow
340 East River Road
New Glasgow, NS B2H 3P7
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

North Sydney
105 King Street
North Sydney, NS B2A 3S1
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm
Phone: (902) 794-5877
Fax: (902) 794-5724

Port Hawkesbury
Chediac Shopping Centre
Reeves Street
P.O. Box 699
Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia B0E 2V0
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm
Phone: (902) 625-4133

Shelburne
Loyalist Plaza
P.O. Box 819
Shelburne, NS B0T 1W0
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm
Phone: (902) 875-3940
Fax:(902) 875-3505

Sydney
Commerce Towers
15 Dorchester St.,
Sydney, NS B1P 5Y9
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

Truro
60 Lorne Street
Truro, NS B2N 3K3
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

Windsor
176 Water Street
P.O. Box 2760
Windsor, NS BON 2T0
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30am
Phone: (902) 798-5705

Yarmouth
13 Willow Street
P.O. Box 249
Yarmouth, NS B5A 4B2
Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm

Appendix II-G Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities

Program Description

The Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) Program replaced the Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons (VRDP) Program on April 1, 1998. Like its predecessor program, EAPD is a cost-shared multi-lateral agreement between the federal government and the provinces. The Nova Scotia agreement is still being worked out. In the interim, however, it is operating in a manner similar to VRDP.

The primary objective of VRDP was to enable individuals with disabilities to become gainfully employed following a period of assessment, career counseling and training. The program operated under the federal-provincial Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons Agreement until March 31, 1998 when the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) Agreement came into effect. Services eligible for funding under VRDP continue to be offered during the transition.

Direct services include:

- Information and referral
- Assessment
- Employment and career counseling
- Skills training
- The provision of required medical and technical aids

The Vocational Rehab/Employability Assistance Program Counselors are responsible for the initial documentation of the applicant, the counseling, and assessment to determine program eligibility, and for working with the applicant to establish a realistic achievable vocational training plan. Once the vocational plan has been established, the counselor may forward a recommendation for training to the Department of Education and Culture Rehabilitation Programs and Services section for provision of goods and services required to make the plan a success.

There are 28 VR/EAPD counselors in the Province at this time serving approximately 1500 people.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the VRDP/EAPD Program, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be disabled within the meaning of the VRDP Agreement - that is, disabled to the extent that they are unable, at the time of requesting services, to seek any meaningful job because of a physical or mental disability, and there is a realistic possibility of benefiting from Voc Rehab/Employability Assistance services.

- The disability makes it impossible to do the work that the person has been trained to do or the disability has made it difficult to undertake training, which would lead to employment.

- Be at least 16 years of age at the time of requesting services
- Be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant who is a resident of Nova Scotia

Application Process/Forms

To apply for the VRDP/EAPD program, the candidate must complete the following:

- A ***Personal Inventory/Application*** for Services filled out by the person requesting services or his/her advocate
- A ***Rehabilitation Medical Report*** filled out by the family doctor. **It is the applicant's responsibility to cover any costs charged for filling out this form**
- ***Medical Information Consent Forms*** for each agency, doctor or hospital from which information is needed to prepare a rehabilitation plan

In certain situations, the applicant may be required to undergo examinations by qualified medical doctors and/or a vocational assessment, and give specific information as needed for program staff.

Disabled persons now employed are generally not eligible for services under the Employability Assistance Program with the following two exceptions:

- Disabled persons who have gone through a vocational rehabilitation program may be eligible to receive assistance in purchasing technical aids and/or required services for a period of up to 36 months following their involvement with the program;
- Disabled persons in danger of losing their job for reasons related to their disability may be provided with required services under the 'vocational crisis' option.

Ineligibility

Voc Rehab/Employability Assistance services are not available to employed disabled persons to assist them to advance in employment.

Disabled persons who have made a claim under the Workers Compensation Act, Veteran's Rehabilitation Act (Canada), or through private insurance companies, are ineligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Disabled persons who are receiving active medical/psychiatric treatment, which would interfere with the vocational rehabilitation process, are not eligible.

Disabled persons are ineligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons Program when the vocational rehabilitation plan falls within the jurisdiction of the provincial educational system.

Claimable Goods and Services

- Tools, Equipment, and Clothing
- Prosthetics, Orthotics, Wheelchairs
- Modifications to Homes, Vehicles, Places of Training/Employment
- Maintenance/Training Allowances
- Transportation and Travel
- Vocational Training (Training on the Job, etc.)
- Employment Placement Services
- Follow-up Goods and Services
- Vocational Crisis supports
- Other Expenses (eg. Fees)

August 31, 1998

Rehabilitation Programs and Services

The Province of Nova Scotia as represented by the Departments of Community Services, Education and Culture, and Health and the Federal Government of Canada as represented by Human Resource Development Canada have jointly entered into the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities Agreement (EAPD) for the purpose of providing a comprehensive program of vocational rehabilitation and employment related services to eligible persons with disabilities within the Province of Nova Scotia.

Within the Province of Nova Scotia the Department of Education and Culture, Rehabilitation Programs and Services section reviews, for the purposes of funding post secondary training or employment interventions, Recommendations For Training presented by the Department of Community Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellors or Career Counselling staff on behalf of EAPD eligible Nova Scotians with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Programs and Services section determines their appropriateness and if approved, authorizes the funding and payment of training costs.

Funding Guidelines

The Rehabilitation Programs and Services section of the Department of Education and Culture does not have the authority to overspend its budget. All statements relating to expenditures in the following document are limited in context to this overriding rule.

THE REHABILITATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES MANAGER OR DESIGNATED ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF MAY:

- Approve a training plan and commit financial resources for the payment of its costs.

- Defer a decision when it is determined that additional information is required, i.e. additional testing, previous marks, additional medical information, etc.

- Reject a recommendation for a training program when the vocational assessment does not support the level and type of requested training.

- Act as a consultant on complex training plans. I.e. comparison of training between private trade schools and community colleges, out of province training, exceptional education supports.

The Department of Education and Culture, Rehabilitation Programs and Services section shall confirm through correspondence to appropriate parties the sponsorship decisions and related details.

Individuals whose requests for sponsorship have been rejected will be advised in writing of their right to appeal the decision through the established appeal process.

After a person with disability has been selected for services by Rehabilitation Programs and Services, the Department of Community Services has the option to make requests for changes to the approved training plan. These requests for changes in the training plan must follow all established protocols for provision of supporting documentation.

Once the RFT has been approved, the Rehabilitation Programs and Services, Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Team (CVRT) can authorize the provision of and/or supply any goods and/or services to modify the training plan as they deem necessary and appropriate to meet the exceptional disability related needs of the student or worker with a disability.

In approving funding for training, previously sponsored student will be given priority in having their needs met. New students will be processed on a first come first served basis. Once the section's budget has been spent, all remaining unfunded students with RFTs will be placed on a waitlist. The waitlist will be developed according to the date on which the RFT has been received at the Rehabilitation Program and Services offices in Halifax.

Waitlist management will consist of the following:

- students who do not attend or who discontinue training will have their allocated funds transferred to those students on the waitlist.

- all waitlisted students will be advised in writing that they have been waitlisted.

- any waitlisted students can directly request clarification of their waitlist position from the Rehabilitation Programs and Services offices.

FULL OR PART-TIME VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Full or part-time vocational training includes:

- Sheltered employment

- Wage subsidy Training On the Job or Training at Non-Profit organizations

- Supported Work Model

- Provincial Community College and Institutes of Technology to the official

program completion date

- Private Trade Schools or Business Colleges that are approved by the province
- Special training courses established or approved by the province i.e. Adult Upgrading, Pre-technology, etc.
- Universities
- Specialized training facilities as approved by the Rehabilitation Programs and Services section. i.e. American Sign Language Academic Upgrading, Technology Assessment Development Centre, Employment Skills Training Program
- Continuing education courses that are approved by the province

PROVISION OF TRAINING

Approved training will:

- be provided to a level that provides the person with disability with sufficient skills to attempt entry into the labour force in a competitive manner with their able-bodied peers.
- be provided to the completion of the first diploma, certificate and /or degree program.

Additional training may be provided when the previous training fails to provide sufficient skills to be competitive in the labour force.

Students are eligible for all approved services on a pro-rated basis, proportionate to full-time study.

Where, due to the nature of the disability, specialized training techniques are necessary, all reasonable costs will be covered. I.e. individual tutoring, home instruction, correspondence courses, technical aids required to participate, etc.

Rehabilitation Programs and Services will approve extensions in skill training programs when a student's disability and other factors make the completion of the programs impossible within the normal time frame.

Individual courses which are considered occupation-specific and which augment the existing skills of an individual may be purchased. An example would be a computer operator's course for an individual previously trained in accounting.

Students whose vocational plan has been approved by the Rehabilitation Programs and Services section and who are paying their own tuition and book costs are eligible, for training related supports, i.e. technical aids, tutors, interpreters. This includes EAPD eligible graduate students and individuals whose sponsorship has been suspended due to failed credits.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL

A completed Recommendation For Training form indication that the training has been medically approved and that the student has been accepted into the training program.

Recommendations requesting funding for the September start date for Community College or University must be received and reviewed by the Committee no later than the end of October of the school year. Sponsorship will be effective to the official course commencement date.

Vocational training plans shall take into account all the funding possibilities offered by the Department of Community Services and or the Employment Insurance Commission.

In case where there is a denial of additional goods or services requested while the person with a disability is in training, the matter may be appealed by the client involved. If appealed successfully, payment will be retroactive to the date of request.

OUT OF PROVINCE TRAINING WILL BE APPROVED WHEN:

- similar or comparable training is not available or cannot be arranged within Nova Scotia.

- specialized training is required as a result of the disability.

UNIVERSITY SPONSORSHIP

University sponsorship may be provided to completion of the first degree. The Rehabilitation Programs and Services section shall decide on the appropriateness of university referrals. An academic Grade XII pass is generally the required pre-requisites to university entrance. Rehabilitation Programs and Services may approve disabled persons who have an equivalent educational level demonstrated by academic achievement testing.

Sponsorship shall be suspended when a student has exceeded a one-credit maximum of courses paid for, but not passed.

Depending upon budget resources full-time and part-time university sponsorship may be available to persons with a disability in approved programs. Sponsorship may consist of funding for:

- tuition

- residence fees to consist of double room accommodation, except in cases where the person with a disability requests a single room for disability related reasons. Requests for a single room must be made to the Rehabilitation Assessment Team for medical approval prior to the request being made to the Rehabilitation Programs and Services Section.

- training related expenses which are paid on a monthly basis and pro-rated, proportionate to a full-time study maximum

- Persons with disability who are being sponsored by the EAPD Program are entitled to retain a maximum of $600 of the total scholarship and bursaries

received in one year. Any monies received above this figure will be used to cover training costs associated with university sponsorship; i.e. tuition, books, residence fees, etc.

TRAINING ON THE JOB, NON-PROFIT TRAINING, AND/OR TRAINING IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Training non-profit and /or voluntary sector is an arrangement with a non-profit organization where EAPD training allowances are utilized as a substitute for wages while the employer trains on site an individual or group of individuals in an occupation which will prepare the individual(s) for full-time or part-time employment. A written training plan outlining the skills to be acquired shall accompany all training non-profit and/or voluntary sector requests.

Training on the Job:

Training on the Job is an arrangement with a specific employer in the private sector to train on site an individual or group of individuals in an occupation which will either result in the individual's full-time or part-time employment with that employer, or the individual's acquisition of transferable skills that will enable them to secure similar employment.

Training on the job program provides for reimbursement to the employer for a portion of the individual trainee's wages for a specific period of time and according to a specific schedule.

THE REIMBURSEMENT OPTIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS: 85% for the first one-third of training time; 50% for the second one-third; 15% for the final one-third; OR 50% reimbursement for the entire period of training.

The training plan to be developed by the employer shall include:

- skills to be acquired and method(s) of instruction
- duration of training plan
- financial commitment
- monthly assessment reports from employer
- the level and amount of supervision provided by the employer during the training process

TRAINING AND TRAVEL ALLOWANCE

Training related expenses paid by the Rehabilitation Programs and Services Section are not intended to be the sole source of financial support for a person with a disability while in training. The expense monies are intended to offset the cost of daily attendance at school. If the student does not attend school there is no expense, and the Rehabilitation Programs and Services section is not responsible for payment to the student.

The allowance schedule for persons with a disability who are in receipt of Income Assistance, and/or Provincial Family Benefits, is $275 per month.

The monthly allowance schedule for individuals who do not have any other source of income is as follows: $340 Basic single person at home; $400 Single person living away from home; $460 One dependent; $520 Two dependents; $580 Three dependents; $640 Four or more

dependents.

For persons in part-time training, allowance will be provided on pro-rated basis, proportionate to the full-time allowance schedule.

The allowance schedule for persons with disabilities who have another source of income (i.e. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, Canada Pension Plan benefits, Schedule B of the Insurance Act insurance benefits, Worker's Compensation Broad permanent or partial disability benefits) will be assessed in accordance with the allowance schedule noted above. Should a deficit exist, training allowances shall be paid in accordance with the training allowance schedule in the amount necessary to offset the deficit.

Worker's Compensation Board pensioners do not qualify for training allowances, except for the case in which a person receiving permanent partial disability benefits and is applying for EAPD services due to a non-compensated disability.

TRAVEL ALLOWANCE:

To qualify for a transportation allowance the person with a disability shall live 24 kilometres or more from the training location and not have another source of income to cover the cost of transportation.

Travel allowances are paid to students on a four-month term basis:

In the case in which the term of study is less than or greater than a four-month term, travel allowance will be a weekly pro rated amount.

The travel allowance for persons with disabilities who are in receipt of another source of income (i.e. Department of Veteran Affairs benefits, Canada Pension Plan benefits, Schedule B of the Insurance Act benefits) will be assessed in accordance with travel allowance set out above. Should a deficit exist, travel allowances will be paid in the accordance with the travel allowance schedule in the amount necessary to offset the deficit.

LIVING OUT OF PROVINCE EXPENSES

Living away expenses are provided to assist in offsetting the additional costs for individuals who have the responsibility of maintaining two households or are residing out of province. An additional $120.00 per month is added to the training related expenses.

ANCILLARY TRAINING COSTS

Due to the nature of their disability, additional support services and specialized equipment may be required to assist the person with the disability to undertake and successfully complete the training plan. To obtain these goods or services, there must be a direct education disability related need.

Examples of such additional supports include: Services of the Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Team to students with a disability; or services to their instructors in such cases where the intervention will improve the performance, productivity and ability of the student to compete with able-bodied peers in training and employment environments. The Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Team consists of: Ergonomists; Learning Disability Specialists; Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist; Rehabilitation Technologists; Blind and Low Vision Specialists.

Special Support Services include: tutors (provided only where there is evidence that the disability presents a barrier in the processing of information in the classroom or place of employment);
interpreters;
attendant care;
supported work trainer (one hundred and eighty hours maximum per client's training site at a cost of no more than $1,800.00).

All existing support services, equipment, and funding available through the training institutions, or Employment Insurance Commission, shall be utilized to their fullest extent before any new purchases will be authorized under Schedule 111.

All equipment provided to persons with disabilities shall be on a 'loan basis' and shall be returned to the Rehabilitation Programs and Services section upon successful completion or discontinuation of the training program.

EXTENT OF SPONSORSHIP

Funding for adult upgrading and continuous intake courses will become effective on the student's start date.

The Rehabilitation Programs and Services section will not be responsible for any financial commitment to a training plan or change in a training plan if the Rehabilitation Programs and Services section prior to its implementation has not approved the change.

Retro-active payment for goods and/or services prior to the date of the decision of the Rehabilitation Programs and Services section to fund such items shall not be made except in cases where there is evidence that there has been a lack of due process in the handling of the case.

Students at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design will receive $800.00 for books and supply costs per term. This is required because of the high cost and large volume of materials required to participate in this program.

Community College students will have their books supplied directly to them by the Community Colleges in which they are studying. Rehabilitation Programs and Services Section will reimburse the Community College for these costs.

Students will retain ownership of the books supplied once the training has been completed.

Community College and Private Trade School EAPD eligible students will receive $100.00 per year for school supplies. Academic upgrading students will receive supply cost of $50.00 per term.

Financial sponsorship under the EAPD Agreement will not duplicate funding provided to those persons with a disabilities who have funding through: Schedule B of the Insurance Act; Department of Veterans Affairs; Worker's Compensation Board; or LTD programs.

Revised April 1, 1998

Appendix II-H

The Opportunities Fund

Provisions of the Opportunities Fund will vary somewhat from region to region within the Province. To find out what is available in your location please contact your nearest Human Resources Centre.

General information is available on the HRDC web site at:

http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/hrib/sdd-dds/odi/content/FACTCO.shtml

In the Halifax Metro area TEAM Work Cooperative Ltd administers the Opportunities Fund. The following brochure is available from the cooperative and is descriptive of this regional program. It will serve as a rough guide only for persons residing elsewhere. Please be sure to contact your local HRC for information specific to the Opportunities Fund in your area.

TEAM Work Cooperative Ltd.
Brochure

OPPORTUNITIES FUND

The Opportunities Fund is a national program of HRDC and is sponsored by TEAM Work Co-operative Ltd in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

The objective of the Opportunities Fund is to assist unemployed persons with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and keep employment.

Applicant Eligibility:

- Applicants must be Unemployed Persons with Disabilities living in the Halifax Regional Municipality
- Applicants must be ineligible for other funding sources such as HRIF, EAPD, student loan etc.

Types of Activities: (may include but are not limited to)

- Provide non-capital support to entrepreneurs to create self-employment
- Encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities whom they may not normally hire through the use of wage subsidies and other supports
- Encourage individuals to accept employment through incentives such as short term financial or service support.
- Provide equipment, technical aids and other accommodations necessary for an eligible participant to accept employment

- Purchase specific services to help develop realistic and effective case plans and to make a person more employable.(E.g. assessment services, anger management, limited specialized counselling)

- Enable individuals to increase their skill level through short term training, including but not limited to CPR, WHMIS, upgrading of specific skills, certification or professional designation courses and non community college academic upgrading programs that will increase employability.

- Increase employability by assisting eligible applicants to participate in training programs that have direct attachment to employment (e.g. STP's).

- When all other funding sources have been exhausted, assist with access to short term training at trade schools, or in community college programs that are identified as being in high demand by labour market information. Skill Development Program guidelines will be followed in these instances for eligible participants.

- Assist with short term incremental costs that may occur with intervention such as childcare, transportation, interpreters, job coaches, personal supports, accommodations, and discretionary one time costs as dictated by individual disability and need.

Other Activities:

- Marketing the Opportunities Fund program and its goals to Employers and to the Community.

- Continue to develop strong partnerships with other programs and services that will facilitate sharing of and/or leveraging of funds to maximize cost effectiveness.

- Encouraging, screening and evaluating applications to the Opportunities Fund.

- Compiling statistics that will clearly show the results of the activities based on client outcomes.

- Keep accurate and up to date accounting of all expenditures and client files including Contact IV input.

- Reporting expenditures, and results to Community and Government partners.

Expected Outcomes:

Fifty percent of participants funded through the Opportunities Fund in Metro will obtain paid employment resulting in savings to the income support system within six months of completing their action plan.

Employers and community members will be more knowledgeable about this HRDC initiative; the employment barriers faced by people with disabilities and effective ways to overcome these barriers. The long-term result should be a decrease in unemployment rates for persons with disabilities in Metro.

For Further Information
Please contact:

Opportunities Fund Co-ordinator
TEAM Work Co-operative Ltd.
2131 Gottingen St., Suite 102
Halifax, NS
B3K 1N4

Telephone: (902) 422-8900
TTY: (902) 422-8943
Fax: (902) 422-3992
Email: ax695@chebucto.ns.ca

Appendix II-I - Sample Resume

Beverly Wishing
1234 Hope Lane.
Halifax, NS
B3H 3J6

Employment Objective:

Full time position as a store manager using extensive retail and managerial experience to provide effective and efficient management of XYZ retail outlet.

Summary of Qualifications:

- Proven managerial skills
- Excellent organizational skills
- Self-motivational with a eye for details
- Exempliary communication and interpersonal skills
- Five years retail experience

Employment:

1998-2000 **ABC Housewares - Manager**. Supervised a staff of 15. Responsible for training, scheduling and maintaining the reputation for good customer service.

1995-1998 **PZ & QZ Women's Apparel - Sales Clerk.** Responsible for maintaining excellent customer service and balancing cash register at the close of each shift and maintaining stock inventory in my department.

Education:

1991-1995 **St. Mary's University** - Bachelor of Commerce
1989-1991 **Rocky Mountain High-school** - Summa Cum Laude

Honours:

1998 **PZ & QZ Women's Apparel**, Employee of the year

Volunteer Work:

1997 to Present **Big Brothers and Big Sisters**

References: Available Upon Request

Appendix II-J Sample Cover Letter

1234 Hope Road
Halifax, N.S.
B3H 3J6

May 28, 2000

Ms. Jane Walker
Human resource Manager
New Millennium Clothing Retail Complex
P.O. Box 5678
Halifax, N.S.
X0X Y0Y

Dear Ms. Walker:

Enclosed is my resume in response to your May 27, 2000 advertisement for the position of Store Manager at XYZ Department Store. I am most interested in this opportunity. I believe it is ideally suited to my skills, experience and long-term interests.

I graduated from St. Mary's five years ago with a Bachelor of Commerce Degree, and have worked almost entirely in a retail environment since that time. During two of those years I held the position of Manager for ABC Housewares. As Manager, I supervised a staff of fifteen employees. Responsibilities included training, scheduling, leading regular staff meetings, and ensuring a reputation of excellent customer service.

I believe my combined educational background and strong professional experience, coupled with excellent organizational skills, would qualify me to make a valuable contribution to your company.

I have been a customer of XYZ Department Store for many years and highly regard their products and quality customer service. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute my managerial, organizational and interpersonal skills as well as my enthusiastic commitment to the XYZ Department Store.

I look forward to hearing from you so that we can discuss further my qualifications and the position. You can reach me at (902) 555-4567. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Beverly Wishing
Enclosure: